

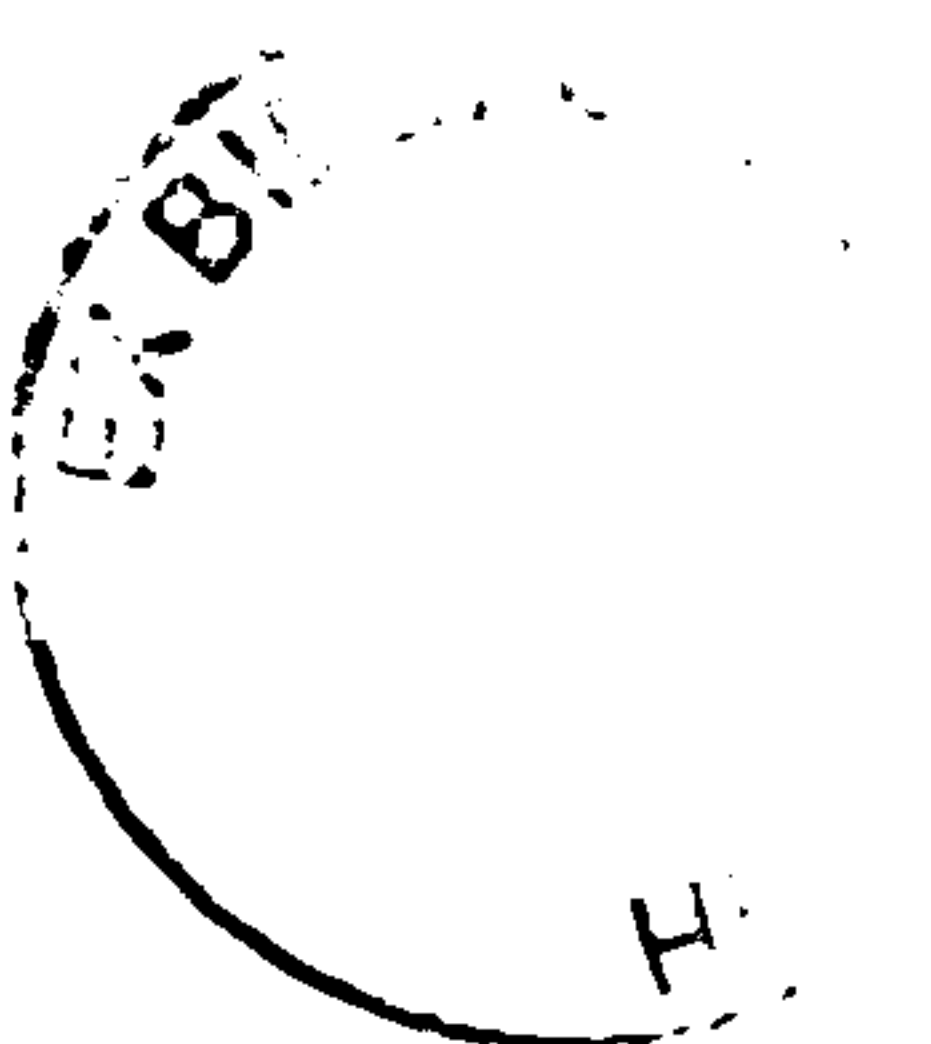
**The introduction and spread of English-language education
in Hong Kong (1842-1913):**

**A study of language policies and practices
in British colonial education**

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To Kerry and Sarah

Abstract

This study examines the nature, purposes and consequences of language policies and practices in Hong Kong education between 1842 and 1913. In particular, it analyses the changing attitudes of the colonial and metropolitan authorities towards the promotion of English-language education (*vis-à-vis* Chinese education) in the colony's school system. Chapter One introduces the central issues and themes of the study. These emerge from an analysis of the scholarly limitations of the surprisingly small body of research that has been conducted into colonial language policy in Hong Kong and in the Empire generally. Chapter Two offers an interpretive historical overview of language in British colonial education, focusing on the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy in India, and thus provides the necessary backcloth against which to view developments in Hong Kong. Chapters Three to Six reconstruct and interpret the history of language in Hong Kong education before the First World War using a range of primary sources, such as government education reports, Colonial Office records, journals and newspapers. Chapter Three examines the introduction of English teaching in early colonial Hong Kong. Chapter Four analyses language policies and practices during the 1860s and 1870s, when Frederick Stewart combined the posts of Head of the Central School, the colony's flagship Anglo-Chinese school, and Inspector of the government vernacular schools. Chapter Five investigates the disputes, deliberations and decisions over language policy that arose from Governor Hennessy's campaign to promote the study and use of English. Chapter Six examines the spread of English-language education between 1883 and 1913. In particular, it analyses how and why the colonial authorities sought to promote English teaching in the public sector, the problems which flowed from the adoption of a pro-English policy, and the measures which the Committee on Education (1902) put forward to address these problems. The Committee's proposals reaffirmed the principles set out in Wood's seminal 1854 Despatch on language in Indian education, namely that the central aim of British policy should be the diffusion of Western knowledge by means of both the vernacular and English languages (the former at primary level and a mixture of the two at higher levels). Chapter Seven summarises and assesses the study's main findings. These provide a corrective to Phillipson's (1992) claim that the British imposed English on their colonial subjects, and in the process rode roughshod over the indigenous languages, and Pennycook's (2002a,b) view that the British often sought to accomplish their imperial objectives by promoting a conservative form of vernacular education. The evidence suggests that Hong Kong's education system provided opportunities for native students to attend purely Chinese schools, purely English schools or mixed-medium schools. Although the British apparently attached more importance to English teaching, especially during the 1890s, they were generally at pains to emphasise that English should not be studied at the expense of Chinese. The findings indicate that language policy (be it Chinese or English in orientation) was always tied in some way to Britain's political and economic interests in the region, but was also motivated by pedagogical considerations, a point that critics tend to ignore or downplay. Finally, the findings suggest that colonial policies and practices in Hong Kong, particularly those directed towards the promotion of Western knowledge and the English language, were widely perceived to have failed to achieve their objectives during the period under review.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis was composed by me, that it is my own work, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Stephen Evans

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In accordance with the University's regulations governing the submission of theses, I wish to acknowledge that (with my supervisors' approval) some material from Chapters One to Three has been incorporated into articles which have appeared in the following journals:

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Abbreviations

CO 129	Colonial Office, Original Correspondence: Series 129
<i>CM</i>	<i>China Mail</i>
<i>CR</i>	<i>Chinese Repository</i>
ELT	English Language Teaching
EMI	English Medium Instruction
GCPI	General Committee of Public Instruction
<i>HKBB</i>	<i>Hong Kong Blue Book</i>
<i>HKDP</i>	<i>Hong Kong Daily Press</i>
<i>HKGG</i>	<i>Hong Kong Government Gazette</i>
<i>HKT</i>	<i>Hong Kong Telegraph</i>
LMS	London Missionary Society
MES	Morrison Education Society
SAR	Special Administrative Region
<i>SCMP</i>	<i>South China Morning Post</i>
<i>YD</i>	<i>Yellow Dragon</i>

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Chapter One

Introduction

This chapter introduces the central issues and themes of this historical study of language-in-education policy and practice in colonial Hong Kong (1842-1913). The first section examines divergent interpretations of British policy and practice in the fields of colonial education studies and applied linguistics. The second section analyses the colonial linguistic inheritance in Hong Kong. Taking as its starting point the post-colonial government's controversial new language policy, this section explores the historical origins of the issues and concerns which the new policy seeks to address. Having established connections between present problems and past developments, the chapter moves on to review the limited body of research that has been conducted into the history of language in Hong Kong education. The chapter concludes with a description of the objectives, scope and sources of the study presented in this thesis.

1.1 Language policy in British colonial education

1.1.1 Perspectives on colonial language policy

The issue of language policy in British colonial education has been a source of controversy since the dispute between the Anglicists and Orientalists in the 1830s over the role of English in the diffusion of Western knowledge in India. Within the field of colonial education studies, the nature and purposes of British policy have been interpreted from two diametrically opposed perspectives: cultural imperialism and enlightened paternalism (Whitehead, 1995). Scholars who see colonial schooling as a vehicle for cultural imperialism have argued that the promotion of Western education through the medium of

English represented the conscious and deliberate imposition of alien knowledge, values and beliefs on the indigenous peoples of Asia and Africa. In his seminal study of colonial schooling, *Education as Cultural Imperialism*, Carnoy (1974) claims that the strong emphasis on European learning in the colonial curriculum was intended to promote a sense of cultural inferiority and inadequacy among indigenous students. By 'colonising' the minds of Asian and African students through the imposition of Western education, the imperial powers were able to ensure a ready supply of subservient subjects who were prepared to accept subordinate social and occupational roles in the colonial hierarchy. Like other critics of colonial schooling (e.g. Ngugi, 1986), Carnoy thus believes that colonial education policies and practices were expressly designed to perpetuate the political, economic and cultural hegemony of the European colonisers. Carnoy's criticism of colonial education has been echoed by Kelly and Altbach (1978), who maintain that colonial schools were established with the primary aim of serving the educational needs and aspirations of the European administrative, business and religious elites. According to Kelly and Altbach (1978: 15), the colonial curriculum 'represented a basic denial of the colonized's past and withheld from them the tools to regain the future'. As the content, medium and methods of education were determined by the colonisers without the input or consent of the subject peoples, colonial schools were essentially alien institutions which were 'detached from indigenous cultures in the languages and in the social values they taught' (ibid.: 3).

The view that colonial education was dictated by a deliberate policy of cultural imperialism has been challenged by Whitehead (1988), who argues that British policy in Asia and Africa was motivated by a strong sense of enlightened paternalism. Whitehead claims that there is little evidence to suggest that policy-makers were inspired by a desire to dominate, subvert or control the minds of their colonial subjects, and instead argues that

education policy in the British Empire before the Second World War was characterised by a mixture of idealism, confusion, pragmatism and expediency. Whitehead further contends that colonial education policy and practice were significantly influenced by the needs, demands and experiences of Britain's Asian and African subjects, who, rather than being the hapless victims of a colonialist conspiracy, increasingly came to regard a modern education in English as the means not only to socio-economic advancement, but also to intellectual and political liberation. Whitehead's interpretation of the motive forces which shaped colonial education policy and practice largely accords with the views of senior officials who were intimately involved in the direction and administration of education in the Empire before the onset of decolonisation (e.g. Mayhew, 1938; Scott, 1938; Lewis, 1954; Cox, 1956). These accounts generally deny the existence of a blueprint for educational development, and instead tend to highlight the mixture of idealism and confusion which lay at the heart of British policy and practice. For example, in a speech about educational problems in the Empire delivered in 1937, the Colonial Secretary, Ormsby-Gore (1937: 164), observed that

It is of course possible for a dominant race with a definite and clear cut attitude towards life and explicit religious, political and economic assumptions to devise an equally definite and clear cut policy for the education of its subject peoples including the imposition of their language, culture and ideas upon them. But the British people have long been varied in their thought and inarticulate in its expression, and nothing surprises us so much as when some foreign traveller and observer philosophises and tries to define British policy in the Colonial Empire or in anything else. We are, I fancy, a nation of opportunists, let us hope enlightened opportunists.

A decade later, another senior official not only denied the existence of a common policy, but also questioned whether the word 'policy' could strictly be applied to educational developments in the Empire, which in many contexts appeared to illustrate the traditional British predilection for 'muddling through':

British education practices – it has hardly been possible to speak of a British education policy – have mingled every approach and every attitude that could be disastrous, disaster itself being warded off only because of the inspired muddle which resulted in nothing getting very far and in what was done in one direction being cancelled out by what was at the same time being done in the opposite direction. (Crocker, 1947: 55)

The disastrous consequences of the quintessentially British traits outlined by Ormsby-Gore and Crocker suggest that educational ‘policy-makers’ may not have been as systematic or determined in their exercise of cultural or linguistic hegemony as their critics claim.

1.1.2 The issue of colonial language policy in applied linguistics and ELT

Until recently, the nature of language policy and practice in British colonial education and, more generally, the relationship between colonialism and the study and use of English worldwide have received relatively little scholarly attention in the fields of applied linguistics and English language teaching (ELT). The lack of interest in these issues is perhaps surprising in view of the historical origins of many of the language-related problems and controversies which have confronted policy-makers in many post-colonial societies, and (particularly) given the instrumental role played by colonial education systems in the global spread of English in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In a recent study of English and the discourses of colonialism, Pennycook (1998: 19) has pointed to the ‘deep and indissoluble links between the practices, theories and contexts of ELT and the history of colonialism’, and yet the nature of these links has been largely unexplored by scholars in applied linguistics and ELT, whose interests and research have traditionally centred on linguistic, psycholinguistic and pedagogical questions (Pennycook, 1994). Although practitioners in these disciplines have long been concerned with the theory and practice of language learning and teaching, as Phillipson (1992) points out, these pedagogical concerns have tended to be examined in isolation from the wider educational

context, whose character is itself profoundly influenced by broader socio-political forces. One consequence of this, according to Phillipson, is that ELT – with its preoccupation with syllabus design, teaching materials, classroom approaches, etc. – has emerged as a narrowly technical discipline that is somehow disconnected or insulated from the social, political, economic and educational structure within which it operates.

In the past decade, however, applied linguists and English-language specialists have come increasingly to recognise that the policies and practices which determine the content, methods and processes of second language instruction are shaped by social, political and economic forces outside the classroom, and that these forces reflect the power and prestige of dominant groups in society (e.g. Tollefson, 1991, 1995, 2002; Phillipson, 1992, 1994; Pennycook, 1995; Canagarajah, 1999; Hall and Eggington, 2000). This broader perspective on the origins of language policies and practices has forced practitioners to question the traditional conception of the English-language classroom as a self-contained, autonomous zone where an ideologically neutral body of knowledge and skills are taught and learned, and to consider the possibility that the seemingly apolitical, professionally grounded decisions which they make every day about classroom content, methods and organisation reflect, and help to reproduce, the unequal distribution of political and economic power in society at large. To date, this new interest in the relationship between language, power and inequality has focused on the ways in which language policies and practices currently in force in many post-colonial education systems not only reinforce unequal social and economic relationships in these nominally independent societies, but also perpetuate the political, economic and cultural influence of the former colonial power (Phillipson, 1992). While scholarly interest in the socio-political dimension of language education has understandably centred on current issues and concerns, there is a growing recognition,

especially in post-colonial societies in Asia and Africa, of the historical origins of many of the language-based problems and inequalities that result from current policies and practices. This increasing awareness of the importance of historical factors in shaping current language policies and practices has led to a modest awakening of scholarly interest in the issue of language policy in British colonial education in the fields of applied linguistics and ELT (e.g. Pennycook, 1994, 1998).

1.1.3 *Linguistic Imperialism* and the global spread of English

Perhaps the most notable (not to say controversial) manifestation of this growing interest in colonial language policy is Phillipson's (1992) polemical book *Linguistic Imperialism*, which examines the factors behind the global spread of English in the past two centuries, and in particular attempts to determine whether its current position as the pre-eminent international language was the outcome of a deliberate policy of the major Anglophone states (through cultural agencies such as the British Council) to promote the use of English for political and economic purposes. Although Phillipson is primarily concerned with developments since the Second World War (i.e. the final decades of the British colonial era and the post- or neo-colonial period), he also devotes a short section (pp. 110-128) of his chapter on the 'colonial linguistic inheritance' to the promotion of English in the British Empire during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Phillipson's account of colonial language policy during this period centres on Macaulay's apparently instrumental role in the diffusion of English education in India. Phillipson argues that Macaulay's famous Minute on Education (1835), which advocated the creation of a class of anglicised Indians, ensured that educational funding in India would in future be devoted to 'the British model', a decision which 'firmly slammed the door on indigenous traditions of learning' (ibid.: 110).

The triumph of Macaulay and the Anglicists in their dispute with the Orientalists over education policy established English as the dominant language of instruction throughout the Indian subcontinent. The pre-eminence of the English language in Indian education and society, in Phillipson's view, constituted one of the Raj's most durable legacies. According to Phillipson, Macaulay's 'strategy' had a 'seminal influence on language policy throughout the British Empire': English was the 'master language' of the Empire, and the 'job of education was to produce people with mastery of English' (ibid.: 111). Phillipson argues that the promotion of English in the Empire in the century after Macaulay's Minute sprang from 'linguicist' beliefs about the superiority of English over the languages of the subject peoples of Asia and Africa. Phillipson defines 'linguicism' (analogous to 'sexism' or 'racism') as 'ideologies, structures, and practices which are used to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (both material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language' (ibid.: 47).

Phillipson's analysis of the origins, nature and purposes of colonial language policy before the Second World War is open to criticism on a number of counts (for critiques of the study as a whole see Conrad [1996] and Davies [1996]). Like other critics of British colonial education, Phillipson fails to take full account of the multifarious factors which influenced the development of language policy in the Empire during this period. Studies of colonial education have cast doubt on the existence of an all-embracing, centrally-directed policy to enforce British cultural and linguistic hegemony through the promotion of English education, and instead have underlined the need for a more comprehensive, multicausal approach to the study of colonial policy (Watson, 1982a; Mangan, 1988; Brutt-Griffler, 2002). Such an approach seeks not only to examine the influence of policy directives initiated in the metropole, but also to determine the precise nature and strength of the

various forces – political, economic, cultural, demographic, religious – which shaped the development of policy in individual colonies. Phillipson (1992: 114) in fact acknowledges that there was ‘considerable diversity in educational practice’ in the Empire, and to illustrate this cites (but chooses not to discuss) one of his main informants on language in British colonial education, George Perren:

Education in each colony tended to be greatly influenced by individuals – governors, directors of education, and particularly by heads of schools or institutions. Colonial educators and administrators were very wary indeed about the relevance of Indian examples and experience, and Macaulay had little influence ... The Colonial Office published reports by its advisory committees, often composed of those with direct experience in various colonies, but did not lay down rules, only principles. (cited in Phillipson, 1992: 115)

Phillipson’s reluctance to explore the implications of Perren’s first-hand account is perhaps understandable since it not only contradicts his argument about Macaulay’s apparently ‘seminal influence’ on British policy, but also appears to weaken the central thesis of *Linguistic Imperialism*, namely that the global spread of English during the colonial and post-colonial periods was the result of a colonialist/capitalist conspiracy. Perren’s evidence does not, of course, exclude the possibility of ‘linguicism’ being a factor in British colonial education: like other imperial powers, the British promoted (and restricted) the study and use of their language in order to advance their wider political and economic interests. This means that any account of British policy and practice must necessarily consider ‘colonialist conspiracy’ as a possible factor. Perrin’s testimony (together with that of other educators and administrators such as Ormsby-Gore and Crocker) does, however, underline the need for a more sophisticated analysis of the complex range of motives which inspired British officials, both in the metropole and in the periphery.

Another limitation of Phillipson’s approach stems from his failure to recognise that British language policy not only varied from context to context, but also changed and

evolved over time. The generalised nature of Phillipson's account inevitably creates the impression that British officials were guided by a coherent, uniform policy which somehow remained largely unchanged from the mid-1830s, when neither empire nor education was a central preoccupation of the metropolitan government, until well into the twentieth century, when empire and education were important issues and concerns. While it is perhaps true that the essentially pragmatic, *laissez-faire* character of British policy altered little before the 1920s, when the Colonial Office began to take a systematic interest in educational development (Whitehead, 1991), language policy and practice in particular contexts did of course change over time – sometimes radically, sometimes subtly – in response to new influences and circumstances. Perhaps the most significant policy shift before the Second World War was the decision in some colonies to promote rudimentary vernacular education while deliberately restricting access to English-medium schools, a policy that was motivated in part by the desire to avoid the mistakes which had been made in India, where the indiscriminate spread of English education had created a class of discontented clerks known as the Bengal Babus. It is clear, therefore, that any study which seeks to offer a convincing explanation of colonial language policy must eschew the notion that a monolithic British policy was somehow frozen in time over vast stretches of the globe, and instead must seek to examine how and why policies and practices changed over time in particular contexts.

From a scholarly perspective, perhaps the most serious weakness of Phillipson's analysis of language policy in the Empire is its lack of empirical underpinning, a limitation which is an inevitable consequence of the polemical nature of his approach. Although Phillipson (1992: 134) notes that the 'basic statistics of colonial education' may be found in the Colonial Office library, even a cursory glance at the sources of his account of language policy in nineteenth-century India reveals a very limited and selective use of primary data.

His quotation from Macaulay's Minute is taken from a secondary source rather than the original, while wholly absent from his account of post-Minute developments in Indian education is any reference to such landmark policy documents as Wood's Despatch (1854) and the report of the Indian Education Commission (1883). Although Phillipson ascribes very clear motives to the formulation of colonial language policy, namely the desire to exercise linguistic and cultural hegemony over the subject peoples of Africa and Asia, he provides scant evidence from existing primary sources, such as Colonial Office records, to show that officials were indeed inspired by such motives, and even if they were, whether their policies were in fact implemented. In order to arrive at an objective assessment of the motives which underlay language policy and practice, be they pernicious or benevolent, we clearly need to enlarge our at present limited knowledge of the history of language in British colonial education, and this can be accomplished only through a careful and dispassionate analysis of the extant primary data.

While Phillipson's interpretation of the aims and purposes of colonial language policy and practice is problematic, his views on their unfortunate (and in some cases disastrous) consequences are somewhat less controversial. In many colonies, English-medium schools, whether under the auspices of the missionary societies or the government, generally enjoyed a higher status than vernacular schools; government funds were often channelled into English-medium secondary and tertiary education rather than elementary vernacular education; English tended to be studied (often superficially and mainly for occupational purposes) at the expense of the local language(s); and the curriculum, textbooks, methods and examinations used in English-medium schools reflected educational practice in England, and were thus not adapted to the needs of students from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Phillipson's views on the undesirable effects of colonial

language policies not only echo those of critics such as Carnoy (1974) and Kelly and Altbach (1978), but are also shared by less ideologically encumbered scholars such as Whitehead (1988, 1995) and Mangan (1988), although the latter, as advocates of a more objective, empirically grounded approach, are prepared to enumerate the benefits of colonial education as well as its costs. The source of the controversy over language in colonial education is therefore not so much the *effects* of British policies and practices as the *motives* which inspired officials and educators to devise and implement them. On this point Phillipson's position is clear: the imposition of English education in the Empire was the result of a deliberate British policy to promote their language and culture worldwide for political and economic purposes. Whitehead (1995), however, claims that such a simplistic interpretation is not supported by official sources, and instead argues that British policy was determined by a sense of enlightened paternalism in official circles and by the strong demand for English-language education from the indigenous peoples of Asia and Africa.

Phillipson's study has raised important questions about the nature and purposes of language policy and practice in the Empire, and the deep and complex relationship between colonialism and the spread of English. As was noted above, these questions have until recently received little scholarly attention in applied linguistics and ELT, a surprising omission in view of Pennycook's (1998: 19) observation that 'ELT not only rode on the back of colonialism to the distant corners of the Empire but was also in turn produced by that voyage'. While it is important to acknowledge the great significance of Phillipson's study in highlighting the crucial role of English in the imperial enterprise, it must also be acknowledged that his analysis of the motives which underlay language policy and practice in the Empire before the Second World War is seriously flawed. The scholarly limitations of Phillipson's approach outlined above point to the need for studies which examine the

issue of language in colonial education *contextually* (i.e. by focusing on the internal and external forces which shaped developments in a particular colony), *historically* (i.e. by describing and accounting for changes in policy and practice over time), and *empirically* (i.e. by marshalling evidence from a variety of primary sources). One context that appears to offer potentially interesting scope for historical research of this nature is Hong Kong, Britain's last major colony, where the issue of language policy, particularly in relation to the teaching and learning of English, was a source of at times bitter debate throughout the colonial period, and, as the next section reveals, has proved to be one of Britain's most problematic legacies.

1.2 Language in Hong Kong education: The colonial legacy

1.2.1 Language issues and a 'vanishing sense of history'

In a recent article, Sweeting (1997: 35) criticises applied linguists for their 'ahistorical, *a priori* approach' to the study of language problems in Hong Kong education. Sweeting, the foremost authority on the history of schooling in Hong Kong, argues that this approach stems not only from the limited historical skills of many applied linguists, but also from the apparent belief among language specialists that their expertise would be questioned 'if they could not come up with some plausible panacea, largely unrelated to the past, but hugely promising about the future'. One consequence of what Sweeting terms the 'vanishing sense of history' (ibid.: 36) in Hong Kong's applied linguistics community is that potentially valuable insights into current issues and problems are ignored or spurned. Although (coincidentally) a handful of historical studies have appeared since he made these criticisms (Bickley, 1997; Evans, 1998a,b, 2000a), Sweeting is surely justified in taking local applied linguists to task for failing to recognise the antecedents (even in the recent past) of many of

the language-related controversies which have preoccupied educators and administrators since the introduction of mass education in the late 1970s. Indeed, as Sweeting implies, if policy-makers had informed their deliberations with the knowledge and experience gained from over a century of English education in Hong Kong, it is possible that some of the now widely acknowledged mistakes in the area of language policy in the past three decades might have been avoided, or at least minimised.

This section seeks to provide the historical perspective that Sweeting believes has traditionally been absent from academic discussions of language in Hong Kong education. Taking as its starting point the post-colonial government's controversial new language policy, it examines the historical origins of the issues and problems which the new policy seeks to address. By establishing connections between past developments and current concerns, it aims to show how the study of history can illuminate our understanding of many of the language-based problems which have faced students, teachers and administrators in Hong Kong since the 1970s. By highlighting the relevance of historical perspectives on current policies and practices, it seeks to demonstrate the need for empirical studies of the history of language in Hong Kong education (of the kind presented in this thesis).

1.2.2 Hong Kong's new language policy in education

In September 1997, a little over two months after Hong Kong's transition from British to Chinese rule, the Education Department of the fledgling Special Administrative Region (SAR) published a policy document which outlined the post-colonial government's position on the roles of English and Chinese in the territory's education system. The new language policy stated that in the 1998-1999 academic year most secondary schools would be required to adopt Chinese as the medium of instruction, while those schools wishing to continue teaching in English would have to demonstrate that their teachers and students were able to make effective use of English as the teaching medium (Education Department, 1997). In December 1997, the Education Department announced that on the basis of the evidence provided by the SAR's secondary schools only 114 schools would be allowed to retain English, while the vast majority of local schools (around 300) would be required to switch to Chinese-medium instruction for all subjects apart from English. The policy to encourage mother-tongue teaching at secondary level represents a fundamental change in the nature of language education in Hong Kong since, for past three decades, the overwhelming majority of students have attended Anglo-Chinese schools where the official medium of written and oral communication has been English. Although the government's decision to force most of the territory's English-medium schools to switch to Chinese was widely predicted in education circles, and was indeed the culmination of initiatives introduced in the last decade of colonial rule, the introduction of the new language policy caused a storm of controversy, particularly among parents and students, who, in letters columns and radio phone-in programmes, expressed their outrage at a policy which they believed to be high-handed, discriminatory and socially divisive.

1.2.3 The post-war transformation of Hong Kong's education system

The source of the controversy over the new policy lies in the remarkable transformation which Hong Kong's education system has undergone since the Second World War. The post-war period has witnessed two fundamental changes at secondary level. First, there has been a dramatic expansion in the number of students receiving a secondary education, from just over 12,000 in 1946 to around 450,000 today. Second, expansion in quantitative provision has been accompanied by a significant change in the medium through which students have received their secondary education.

In the early post-war years, education for the Chinese in Hong Kong was organised into two linguistically and culturally distinct streams which reflected educational development in the first hundred years of colonial rule (1842-1941): an Anglo-Chinese stream which offered an academic education mainly through the medium of English, and a Chinese-medium stream which reflected educational practice on the Chinese mainland (So, 1992). During the 1950s, a reasonable balance existed within the Anglo-Chinese stream at primary and secondary levels, and between the Anglo-Chinese and Chinese streams at secondary level (Table 1). During the next four decades, however, the Anglo-Chinese secondary stream expanded very rapidly at the expense of the Chinese stream, with the result that by the final decade of colonial rule over 90% of secondary students were attending schools whose *de jure* (if not *de facto*) medium of instruction was English. During the same period, the Chinese-medium primary stream maintained its dominance over the Anglo-Chinese stream. Thus, for much of the post-war period, the vast majority of children in Hong Kong received a primary education in Chinese-medium schools (with English taught as a subject) before switching to (mainly) English-medium schools for their secondary education. The small Anglo-Chinese secondary stream of the early 1950s had

thus been transformed from a system intended for the elite into one catering for the masses. This transformation, which has been the source of many of the language-related problems in Hong Kong's education system in the past three decades, is the key to understanding the origins of the new language policy, and the reasons why it has proved so controversial.

Table 1 Primary and secondary enrolments in Hong Kong by stream (1955-1997).

Year	Primary Schools		Secondary Schools	
	Anglo-Chinese	Chinese	Anglo-Chinese	Chinese
1955	18,920	167,814	24,313	21,105
1960	38,587	338,805	44,284	24,601
1965	56,135	546,524	92,481	43,338
1970	64,596	678,783	145,849	45,226
1975	48,153	625,647	240,391	60,812
1980	Not available	Not available	371,282	55,376
1985	40,748	491,599	358,928	37,556
1990	37,667	447,668	388,951	35,293
1994*	33,646	429,427	421,269	26,804
1997	32,516	415,987	421,573	25,573

Collated from the Education Department's Annual Summaries/Enrolment Surveys (1955-97). * Statistics relating to the medium of instruction are not included in the Enrolment Survey for 1995.

At first sight it might appear that the rapid expansion of the Anglo-Chinese stream and the virtual eclipse of the Chinese stream in post-war Hong Kong was simply the result of a colonialist conspiracy. While the colonial government clearly played an important role in fostering an environment in which English-medium schools were likely to flourish – through its reluctance to enforce a clear language policy, through its reliance on voluntary agencies and private organisations in shouldering the main burden of educational provision, and, not least, through its promotion (directly or indirectly) of English in the domains of government, the law and business – the rise of the Anglo-Chinese stream and the concomitant decline of the Chinese stream can to a great extent be attributed to the

interaction of a series of endogenous and exogenous forces which have shaped the development of society in Hong Kong since 1945. The most important of these were demographic, political and economic.

The rapid and sequential expansion of education at primary and secondary levels has primarily been driven by the dramatic increase in Hong Kong's population, from around 600,000 in 1945 to almost seven million today. The government's main priority in education during this period therefore involved the provision of school places for the children of the refugees who poured into Hong Kong during the 1940s and 1950s to escape from the political and economic upheavals on the Chinese mainland after the communist take-over in 1949. The fact that the vast majority of the 'baby-boom' generation opted to pursue their secondary studies in the English-medium rather than the Chinese-medium stream was more the result of political and economic developments in China and Hong Kong than a carefully planned and executed government policy to promote the use of English in the colony. The isolationist stance adopted by China towards Hong Kong and the West from the early 1950s to the late 1970s severely limited the opportunities of secondary-school graduates for higher education and employment on the Chinese mainland. With the traditional avenues for advancement cut off, young people had little alternative but to further their studies or careers within Hong Kong. During the same period, Hong Kong's economy underwent a period of rapid development which opened up opportunities for socio-economic advancement to those who had received a successful secondary education. Given the traditional importance of English in government, business and tertiary-level education in Hong Kong, and the emergence of English as the predominant medium of international trade and academic discourse, it was understandable that the post-war generation of parents and students would regard an English-medium secondary education as an important determinant of 'upward and outward mobility' (So, 1992: 78). This

evidence suggests that, rather than being the passive victims of a British plot, the Chinese community in Hong Kong played a decisive role in shaping language policy and practice during this period.

What is often overlooked in academic discussions about language in Hong Kong education, especially those which claim that the promotion of English was the outcome of a colonialist conspiracy, is that there has always been a demand for English-medium education in the territory, and, as in the late twentieth century, this demand was fuelled by a recognition of the close relationship between proficiency in English and social mobility. The pragmatic approach adopted by students at the government Central School (subsequently named Victoria College and Queen's College) during the second half of the nineteenth century was often a source of disappointment to its first two headmasters, Frederick Stewart (1862-1881) and George Bateson Wright (1881-1909):

I do not believe [wrote Stewart] that one of the two hundred and odd boys in the school comes to be educated, in the proper sense of the word. Their only aim is to obtain such a knowledge of the English *language* as will enable them to get situations which prove more lucrative than any which they could hope to get without it ... (*Hong Kong Blue Book [HKBB]*, 1867: 291)

It would be an exaggeration to suppose [observed Wright] that even one-tenth of the Chinese boys who attended this College do so with the object, pure and simple, of acquiring an English education *per se*; *i.e.*, for the mental enlargement and other advantages to be derived from it. Before he can talk English plainly on any other subject, a boy at the bottom of the school will tell you, that his aim is to get dollars, to raise his market value. (*Hong Kong Government Gazette [HKGZ]*, 10 March 1894: 119)

The strong demand for English-language education was also noted by a visiting British educationalist in the mid-1930s: '... there is an insistent demand on the part of Chinese parents for their children to be taught English. A Government school in the City of Victoria which has hitherto taught English would soon be empty if it ceased to do so' (Burney, 1935: 12). One consequence of this demand for English was that students tended to neglect the

study of their own language, a practice that Stewart attempted to resist throughout his headmastership:

The aim is to put both languages, English and Chinese, on a footing of perfect equality, as far as that is possible, and not to sacrifice the one to the other. At first, the Chinese would have been glad to throw their own language overboard, but this could not be listened to. The result would have tended to denationalization and the production of a tribe of smatterers utterly useless for interpretation, or, for that matter, anything else. It took much persistence for many years to overcome this reluctance to learning Chinese, but such a thing is never heard now. (*HKGG*, 5 February, 1876: 78).

It would therefore be misleading to interpret the promotion of English-language education during the colonial period as a simple case of linguistic or cultural subjugation. The colonialist conspiracy thesis may contain some truth (it could hardly be otherwise), but it is not the whole truth. As we have seen, developments in the post-war period cast doubt on the validity of the uni-directional, monocausal approach favoured by some of the more virulent critics of colonial education, and instead underline the need for a more sophisticated and comprehensive approach to the study of the history of language in Hong Kong education; one which takes account of a range of internal and external factors (e.g. political, economic, demographic, social); one which acknowledges the complexities, ambiguities and paradoxes of language in colonial education; and one which allows for the possibility that language policy and (particularly) practice were shaped by both the coloniser and the colonised.

1.2.4 Classroom language use in the Anglo-Chinese stream

The transformation of the Anglo-Chinese stream in the late twentieth century was accompanied by considerable concern among educators and administrators about the problems which many students experienced when learning academic subjects in English. During the 1980s, the pedagogical problems associated with English-medium instruction apparently resulted in a significant shift in classroom practices in the majority of schools in the Anglo-Chinese stream. While English continued to be the official teaching medium in these schools, the usual mode of classroom instruction and interaction involved switching between and mixing English and Cantonese (Johnson, 1998). Research conducted in Hong Kong classrooms during the 1980s and 1990s revealed a steady decline in the use of English in content subjects, and an increase in Cantonese and mixed code (Cantonese admixed with English terms) (Johnson and Lee, 1987; Johnson, 1991; Pennington, 1995; Evans, 2000b, 2002). The adoption of mixed-mode instruction in the Anglo-Chinese stream during this period was not just the result of the limited English proficiency of many local students. According to various government reports on language in education (Education Commission, 1994, 1995), many content-area teachers lacked the proficiency required to teach effectively and consistently in English. Another factor which militated against the use of English was the need for teachers of content subjects to cover academic syllabuses which had not been properly adapted to the needs of students in a mass education system. Given the constraints under which teachers were forced to operate, mixed-mode teaching was a necessary and inevitable expedient.

During the last two decades of colonial rule, a wide gulf thus apparently existed between policy and practice in the majority of Hong Kong's English-medium schools, for although English continued to be the usual medium of written communication, Cantonese and

Cantonese-English mixed code were the dominant media of oral communication. Mixed-mode teaching was thus a compromise between English-medium instruction, which the majority of students and teachers were apparently unable to cope with, and Chinese-medium instruction, which Hong Kong's parents were perceived not to favour. Although mixed-mode instruction was defended in some quarters (Luke, 1991), during the 1990s it was regarded in official circles as the main cause of 'declining' standards of English (Education Commission 1990, 1995). It was the desire to eliminate mixed-mode instruction, and thereby ensure the consistent use of English or Chinese as teaching media, which led to the formulation of the controversial policy to force most nominally English-medium schools to switch to Chinese, while retaining an elite English stream, whose graduates (as the beneficiaries what is intended to be a genuine immersion programme) are expected to possess the high levels of English proficiency demanded by Hong Kong's influential business, professional and academic communities.

It is widely believed that the problems associated with English-medium education were first highlighted by Cheng *et al.* (1973) in *At What Cost?: Instruction through the English Medium*. The period before the 1970s (extending as far back as the 1860s) tends to be seen as a 'golden age' in Hong Kong's educational history, during which the privileged children of Hong Kong's urban elite mastered with ease the content and medium of a traditional English education. Reports on Queen's College in the late nineteenth century, however, indicate that students at the government's flagship Anglo-Chinese school may have encountered the same kinds of problems studying an ill-adapted academic curriculum as their counterparts in the late twentieth century:

English reading books put in their hands which in no way connect with the social, moral and national environment of a Chinese brain, home or school, but plunge these boys head over heels into a sphere congenial indeed to the English-bred school-boy, but to these Chinese lads utterly bewildering,

besides presupposing an amount of knowledge of idiomatic and technical English phrases which every English school-boy has at his fingers' ends when first entering school but which are Greek to these Chinese youths even when they have spent five or six years in Victoria College. (*HKGG*, 19 November, 1892: 966)

Government reports on education also provide some evidence that the much-reviled mixed-mode instruction, far from being a recent development, may have been widely used in the colony's Anglo-Chinese stream in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries:

In Queen's College and the Anglo-Chinese District Schools, Chinese has always been the actual medium of instruction. (Committee on Education, 1902: 500)

... much of the inability to speak or understand English is due to the fact that the Chinese masters employ Chinese and not English, when giving directions connected with the ordinary routine work. We have no wish to question the zeal of the Chinese masters; they appear to be carrying out to the best of their ability a very difficult task, but in the Lower School, Chinese as a medium of communication between master and boy was, as we have said, far too common. (*HKGG*, 20 November 1903: 1626)

This evidence raises the rather startling possibility that mixed-mode teaching, the apparent source of Hong Kong's current language malaise, may have been the norm in the Anglo-Chinese stream throughout the colonial period rather than a comparatively recent aberration. Indeed, it needs to be asked whether the kind of 'genuine' English-medium education envisaged by the designers of the new language policy ever really existed in the colony's education system, apart from in perhaps a handful of prestigious mission schools.

1.2.5 The issue of ‘declining’ English standards

During the past two decades, the issue of ‘declining’ standards has dominated public discourse about the teaching and learning of English in Hong Kong. Hardly a week goes by without a comment or report in the English or Chinese media about unsatisfactory levels of English, and as Joseph (1996) notes, those who are most emotional and vociferous about the issue tend to be Hong Kong Chinese who themselves are highly proficient in the language. Widespread dissatisfaction with English standards has prompted the government to introduce a series of expensive and ambitious measures in an effort to solve the ‘problem’. These have included the establishment of an Institute of Language in Education, the adoption of a communicative English-language curriculum, the recruitment of expatriate English teachers, the setting of language proficiency requirements for English teachers, and, most recently, the launching of a high-profile Workplace English Campaign.

Although language standards have been a source of concern since the late 1970s, it is perhaps not widely known that English levels were perceived to be unsatisfactory throughout the colonial era, as the following extracts reveal:

- From an Education Commission report in the 1990s:

... many of our upper secondary students do not have the English proficiency required by tertiary education institutions or the vocational sector. (Education Commission, 1995: ix)

- From the preamble to Hong Kong’s English curriculum in the 1980s:

... a final justification for the revision of the English syllabuses can be presented in terms of the widespread dissatisfaction with the standards of English which is continually being expressed by parents, teachers, employers and other members of the Hong Kong community. (Curriculum Development Committee, 1981: 7)

- From an article about Hong Kong University students in the 1970s:

For the majority of students entering the University of Hong Kong English is not a viable means of communication at all. About a fifth of them cannot make themselves understood in English, and their comprehension of spoken English is poor in the extreme. Few students can write English which is not bizarre. (Lord, 1974: 1)

- From an article about secondary education in the 1960s:

Obviously, thousands of class hours are being misused on worthless ‘grammar’. If that time were spent instead on activities that enabled the student to use the common sentence patterns of English, many times and *aloud*, the standard of English in Hong Kong would not be so low as it unfortunately is. (Anon., 1963: 31)

- From an article about secondary education in the 1950s:

In Hong Kong, conditions for the study of living English are particularly favourable, for not only is it widely spoken, but the market value of a good knowledge of English is a very strong incentive to any pupil to work hard at his studies. Why is it, then, that the standard of English is so low? (McClellan, 1953: 3)

- From the report of a visiting British Inspector of Schools in the 1930s:

... not only do the pupils commonly speak English badly ... but even their understanding is often so poor that they have to be given special training. (Burney, 1935: 11)

- From an article about Hong Kong University in the 1920s:

Even students from the local schools, as experience in this university’s classrooms was showing, possessed at this time only a limited working knowledge of English. Undergraduates were finding the strain of following degree courses, especially in the arts, almost impossibly heavy; many were failing in examinations in spite of the strenuous efforts of the teaching staff; all concerned felt discouraged and frustrated. (Harrison, 1962: 48)

- From a debate in the Legislative Council in the 1910s:

Turning to the question of the teaching of Chinese boys in English, we also agree that the methods in vogue may well be looked into and improved. Given the same length of time for schooling, and the same standard of education, the Chinese boys learning English nowadays do not as a rule speak and write the language so well as the students of a decade or two ago. (*Hong Kong Hansard*, 31 October 1916: 76)

- From a report on the Anglo-Chinese stream in the 1900s:

As regards English, in colloquial, composition, and intelligent reading alike, the results attained are not commensurate with the time devoted to the study. (Committee on Education, 1902: 499)

- From a report on the Anglo-Chinese stream in the 1890s:

... the Board of Examiners passed, in June 1894, a stricture on the system of teaching English in local schools for the Chinese, which is virtually a repetition of the complaints which I repeatedly made during the last few years. I regret to have failed to convince Her Majesty's Government of the reality and serious nature of the defect referred to, which is painfully in evidence by the fact that the promotion and use of the English language in the Chinese commercial and social life of this Colony makes no progress because it is not materially aided by local Schools. (*HKGG*, 17 August 1895: 886)

- From an Education Commission report in the 1880s:

... very few of the Chinese boys who learn English in this colony are able to speak it fluently. (Education Commission, 1882: 14)

- From a report on the 'village' schools in the 1870s:

On visiting some of these Village Schools, I found the Schoolmasters could not speak a word of English, and as far as I could ascertain, none of the pupils had any knowledge of English. (*HKGG*, 16 February 1878: 51)

- From a report on the Central School in the 1860s:

"English conversation" is a subject of great difficulty to the boys, and I am sorry to find people so exacting in this matter. Several have been rejected, without trial, on account of this defect. It is very easily accounted for. The boys have no possible opportunity of speaking English except to their teachers at school. It cannot, therefore, be expected that immediately on leaving school they could be very proficient in it. (*HKBB*, 1868: 287)

Perhaps no other language issue in Hong Kong education would have benefited more from a historical perspective than the question of 'declining' English standards (after all, major policy initiatives have hinged on it), and yet it is widely perceived to be a relatively recent phenomenon, and one that was entirely attributable to the introduction of mass education in the late 1970s. The evidence presented above, however, suggests that the 'problem' of

‘unsatisfactory’ English levels existed throughout what some commentators see as the ‘golden age’ of English-language education in Hong Kong.

1.2.6 Language policy in Hong Kong education

When the new policy was announced, it was assumed in some quarters that the decision to promote mother-tongue education was a natural consequence of Hong Kong’s return to China. What tended to be overlooked in the public outcry over the decision was that the new policy was the logical outcome of initiatives introduced in the last decade of British rule. Wholly absent from the debate was the fact that the colonial government had consistently (if half-heartedly) supported Chinese-medium education throughout the post-war period. In fact, the origins of the policy to support Chinese-medium education can be traced to the report of a British Inspector of Schools, Edmund Burney, whom the Colonial Office had sent to investigate the state of education in the colony in the 1930s. Burney’s (1935: 25) report, which was highly critical of the government’s neglect of vernacular primary education, recommended that education in the colony should be ‘re-oriented so as eventually to secure for its pupils, first a command of their own language sufficient for all needs of thought and expression, and secondly, a command of English limited to the satisfaction of vocational demands’.

It proved impossible to implement Burney’s recommendations before the fall of Hong Kong to the Japanese in 1941, but when the British resumed sovereignty over the territory in 1945, it was intended that the Burney report would form the basis for language policy in the post-war period. In its first annual report after the liberation, the Education Department (1947: 30) outlined its policies for the new era, which included the need for ‘greater participation by government in the provision of primary and secondary education in the

vernacular'. In line with this policy, the authorities issued two circulars to schools proposing that the medium of instruction in all government-aided schools up to junior secondary level should be Chinese. The language circulars caused a storm of controversy, and after a vigorous campaign led by the colony's most prestigious schools, the government backed down, and the policy was never implemented (Sweeting, 1993).

The government's reluctance to enforce the language circulars set the tone for developments in language policy during next fifty years, for although various official bodies recommended greater emphasis on Chinese in Hong Kong's education system (Keswick, 1952; Education Commission, 1963, 1984, 1986; Board of Education, 1973; Llewellyn, 1982), the government failed to formulate and implement a clear policy, primarily because of the strong support for English-medium education among parents and employers (Hong Kong Government, 1965, 1974). The politically expedient policy of *laissez-faire* began to change in the late 1980s, when the Education Department, under pressure from the academic and business communities to improve English standards, abandoned its policy of 'encouraging' schools to switch from English to Chinese, and in its place set out the blueprint for the new language policy. Working from proposals outlined by the Education Department (1989), the Education Commission (1990) stated that a 'coherent framework' was needed to ensure that teachers and students make consistent use of English or Chinese in the classroom. It was therefore proposed that students be streamed according to their ability to study effectively in English or Chinese. Since it was estimated that only around a quarter of the students in each age cohort would be capable of studying in English, under the Education Commission's scheme the majority of students would be forced to study in Chinese. Despite accusations about a return to elitism and discrimination – 'our linguistic Berlin Wall of the 1990s' opined So (1992: 86) – the controversial proposals were approved by Hong Kong's Executive Council

in 1992. However, implementation of the policy in the dying years of colonial rule was slow. In 1994, the Education Department started to advise schools on the language proficiency of their Secondary 1 intakes in order to assist them in their choice of an appropriate teaching medium, but since school authorities were at liberty to ignore this advice, most Anglo-Chinese schools continued to claim to be English-medium (as the enrolment figures for 1994 and 1997 in Table 1 indicate). In the same year, the government announced that it would issue 'firm guidance' on the medium of instruction to all secondary schools for adoption in 1998-99, a decision which ensured that the politically unpopular element of coercion would be introduced only after the return of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty.

While the Burney report might be regarded as a watershed in the history of education in Hong Kong, in that it marked the British government's acceptance (in principle) of the need to promote Chinese education, what tends to be forgotten is that the colonial regime's earliest educational initiatives (during the 1840s and 1850s) were directed towards the promotion of vernacular (rather than English) education (Evans, 1998b), a point which Bolton (2000a: 271) overlooks when noting in a recent article that 'in fact, the British colonial administration attempted as early as the mid-1970s to introduce a policy of vernacular language education'. Furthermore, when government involvement in English-language education began in the early 1860s, with the establishment of the Central School, Frederick Stewart (as already noted) was anxious to ensure that his students received a firm foundation in both English and Chinese:

I know of no more humiliating spectacle than to see boys, as we do frequently in Hong Kong, who know English much better than they do Chinese, who entirely neglect their own language when they begin to learn the other, and who when asked for the translation of a letter or a petition fail to render it intelligibly. If there is anything which ought to be aimed at in connexion with the School it is that this disgrace shall not attach to it. (*HKBB*, 1866: 280)

What is also worth noting is that for much of the nineteenth century, the Central School (in its various guises) was the only government-run Anglo-Chinese school; the medium of instruction in all the other public schools (and most mission schools) during this period was Chinese. Although the late nineteenth century witnessed a decisive shift towards English in the government sector, the new policy did not necessarily mean that the study of Chinese was entirely marginalised. For example, in a speech to students at Victoria College in 1893, Governor Robinson takes it as axiomatic that Chinese-language instruction along traditional lines would continue to play an important role in an institution whose principal objective was apparently to anglicise its student body:

... I hold that in Victoria College and all institutions of a like nature the main object to be kept perpetually in view should be the teaching of English, combined, of course, with the teaching of Chinese according to Chinese methods. And in addition to this there should be the importation in such an institution, as a necessary corollary, of the best of English customs and English ideas. (*China Mail*, 9 February 1893: 3)

It is interesting that one of the examples which Sweeting (1997) cites to illustrate his point about the ‘vanishing sense of history’ among Hong Kong language specialists is in the area of language policy. Sweeting believes that ‘It could have helped policy makers and advisers in 1973 and 1974 ... as they debated whether to make Chinese the normal language of instruction in the early years of secondary education, if they had remembered to check what had happened in 1946 when language circulars proposing precisely this were withdrawn by the Education Department’ (ibid.: 36). The same advice might also apply to policy-makers, applied linguists and ELT practitioners today as they grapple with the colonial linguistic inheritance. In fact, they might find that their understanding of current issues and problems would also be illuminated by studying Burney’s proposals in the mid-1930s, the reports of the Education Commission (1882) and the Committee on Education (1902), Colonial Office correspondence during the controversial Governorship of Sir John

Pope Hennessy (1877-1882), Stewart's education reports during the 1860s and 1870s, and indeed the annual reports of the Morrison Education Society School, the colony's first Anglo-Chinese school. Unfortunately, as the next section reveals, these documents – and other interesting primary data relating to language policy and practice – have received surprisingly little scholarly attention from applied linguists and ELT specialists in Hong Kong.

1.3 Historical studies of language in Hong Kong education

The first historical perspective on colonial language policy in Hong Kong can be found in Cheng *et al.* (1973). Although the authors point out that *At What Cost?* is not a piece of formal academic research, they nevertheless devote a short section of their report to the history of language policy from the 1840s to the 1960s. Since the main purpose of the report was to awaken the public to the problems associated with English-medium instruction, it is perhaps not surprising that Cheng *et al.*'s anti-colonialist interpretation of British policy provides a convenient starting point for their main argument that 'the Chinese language should be used as a medium of instruction as far up the education ladder as possible' (ibid.: 54). Although *At What Cost?* is a polemical rather than a scholarly work, it is important to note that Cheng *et al.*'s thesis – that the emphasis on English and neglect of Chinese was the result of a colonialist conspiracy – is not founded on a careful analysis of a range of primary sources. Indeed, the very brief discussion of language policy before the Second World War is based almost exclusively on a handful of outdated secondary sources.

Two years after the appearance of *At What Cost?*, Fu (1975) completed her doctoral thesis, *A Hong Kong Perspective: English Language Learning and Chinese Students*, which examines the cultural, historical and attitudinal factors which have influenced the learning of English in the territory. Fu devotes one chapter of her study to a survey of language policy from the 1840s to the publication of *At What Cost?*. The major part of the study focuses on ELT in Hong Kong in the early 1970s, the findings of a series of questionnaires about student attitudes towards English, learning English and English-speaking people, and recommendations for the future. The study is not therefore primarily intended as a work of history; the historical perspective serves mainly as background to the attitudinal and cultural factors which shaped English-language learning in the early 1970s.

Although Fu's study still offers a useful overview of language-related developments in Hong Kong education, it inevitably contains a number of limitations. In the first place, since the study was written before historical research into Hong Kong education began in earnest, there are understandably a number of important errors and omissions (of both fact and interpretation) in her account of language policy in the first century of British rule. In the three decades since Fu's thesis was written a number of studies have appeared which have added to our understanding of educational development in nineteenth-century Hong Kong (e.g. Ng Lun, 1984a; Vickner, 1987; Leung, 1989; Sweeting, 1990; Bickley, 2002). This period has also witnessed the publication of numerous scholarly books and articles about various aspects of Hong Kong's history from pre-colonial times to the Japanese occupation. Although many of these works have little or nothing to say about education or language, they nevertheless provide a wealth of information about the social, political, economic and cultural factors which (directly or indirectly) influenced educational development during this period. Since a great deal more is now known about education and

society in nineteenth-century Hong Kong, Fu's analysis of language policy during this period appears (from the more informed perspective of today) to be both superficial and unreliable.

Perhaps the most serious limitation of Fu's study lies in her use of sources. Since her historical overview is primarily intended as background to the 'core' chapters on language attitudes, and since the availability of secondary and primary sources on Hong Kong education and society was somewhat limited in the early 1970s, it is perhaps inevitable that Fu's account of the nineteenth century is mainly based on secondary sources such as Endacott's *A History of Hong Kong*, which was first published in 1958, and Lun's (1967) Master's thesis on education policy. Apart from a handful of well-known government reports, Fu makes little use of primary sources in her account of language policy before 1941, and while it is true that her discussion of post-war developments is informed by a greater range of primary sources, these documents deal exclusively with language in education. Although sources of this nature should obviously be central to any discussion of language policy, the exclusion of other sources of primary (and secondary) data – political, economic, demographic – in her accounts of both the post-war period and (particularly) the period between 1842 and 1941 means that Fu's analysis of educational change takes place in a contextual vacuum.

The limited range of primary and secondary sources used by Fu inevitably casts doubt on the reliability of her interpretation of language policy, which, like *At What Cost?*, sees the rise of the Anglo-Chinese stream at the expense of the vernacular stream in post-war Hong Kong as the outcome of a colonialist conspiracy. It also calls into question the soundness of her hypothesis that Hong Kong students' English standards are low because

their attitudes toward the language are ambivalent and because they may be uncertain about aligning themselves with the English speakers who govern

Hong Kong, British who more than any other peoples humiliated China in the 19th century. The race which was once ruled by the Son of Heaven does not readily admit to foreign superiority. (Fu, 1975: 185-186)

The anti-colonialist stance adopted by Fu and Cheng *et al.* can partly be attributed to the anti-British climate which prevailed in Hong Kong in the late 1960s and early 1970s, most notably in the Maoist-inspired riots of 1967, when the authority of the colonial regime was shaken to its roots. One manifestation of this anti-colonial sentiment was the student-led campaign for Chinese to be accorded official status with English, an aim that was eventually achieved in 1974. In her discussion of *At What Cost?*, Fu observes that its authors, far from being the stereotypical ‘mousy individuals who memorize notes for regurgitation on exams’, represented a new generation who ‘are asking questions, are committed to an idea, are not afraid to speak out’ (ibid.: 72). Fu does not, however, allow for the possibility that these desirable qualities may have been (either directly or indirectly) the result of a modern education in English; that, in fact, far from being a vehicle for linguistic and cultural imperialism, a Western education could be the source of political and intellectual liberation, as proved to be the case in other colonial settings.

Since the publication of Cheng *et al.*’s tract and Fu’s thesis, no comprehensive historical studies of language in Hong Kong education have appeared. The handful articles which have been written in the past two decades have tended to focus on developments in the post-World War II period (e.g. Cheng, 1983; Bickley, 1987; Sweeting, 1991; So, 1992; Boyle, 1995). The absence of a substantial body of historical research is revealed in Pennington’s (1994) comprehensive review of the literature on language use in Hong Kong society, where the history of language in education is covered in two pages, and the period between 1842 and 1941 is summarised in two paragraphs. The reason for the cursory treatment of this topic is presumably not that Pennington believed that historical

perspectives are unimportant or irrelevant but that there was simply very little literature to review.

In 1997, the final year of colonial rule, two studies appeared which, in different ways, are of interest to students of the history of language in Hong Kong education. The more important of the two, and in many respects the most substantial historical study to appear since Fu's thesis, is Bickley's (1997) biography of Frederick Stewart (see also Bickley, 1990; Workman, 1990). Bickley's study, which traces Stewart's life and career from his education in Aberdeen in the 1850s to his death in Hong Kong in 1889, focuses on Stewart's experiences as the first headmaster of the Central School, the major government initiative in English-language education in the nineteenth century. Bickley's work is thus of considerable value and relevance to those sections of the present study which deal with language policies and practices between the 1860s and the 1880s (Chapters Four and Five). However, since her study focuses on the Central School and is primarily biographical in nature, it is no part of Bickley's purpose to place the school's work within the context of the education system as a whole; nor does she attempt to examine Stewart's policies and practices in relation to educational developments in Britain's other Asian colonies. Bickley devotes little space to educational development in the first two decades of colonial rule (1842-1862), and (surprisingly) chooses not to examine the origins and significance of the policy to promote English in the colony through the establishment of the Central School. Other (more serious) weaknesses in Bickley's account are discussed in 4.2.1 and 5.1.1.

The second historical study to appear in 1997 was Boyle's exploration of Phillipson's notion of linguistic imperialism in the Hong Kong context. Boyle's survey of language policy since the 1840s leads him to conclude that 'it is not easy to assess the extent to which the label of linguistic imperialism can be applied to the story of English in

Hong Kong', although he does point out that 'whether they thought they were being culturally compromised or not, Hong Kong Chinese have always *wanted* English' (ibid.: 176). A close examination of Boyle's sources for his brief survey of the pre-1941 period reveals that the material on which he bases his analysis is exclusively derived from Endacott's dated history of Hong Kong and the historical overview in Fu's thesis. While it is true that Boyle makes greater use of primary sources in his discussion of post-war developments, these documents are highly accessible official reports which have been widely discussed in the literature on language policy in the past decade. Thus, in his attempt to address the issue of linguistic imperialism in Hong Kong, Boyle prefers to review a limited range of well-known and recent primary sources (and dated secondary sources) rather than present and discuss new sources of information, and this perhaps explains his difficulty in reaching a definitive conclusion about the applicability of Phillipson's concept to the Hong Kong context.

Boyle's study is characteristic of much of the literature on the history of language in Hong Kong education (Fu, 1975; Sweeting, 1991; So, 1992; Boyle, 1995). Although these studies provide useful introductory overviews of language policy during the colonial era, they share three fundamental limitations. In the first place, partly because of their broad scope (covering in some cases the entire colonial period in a paper or chapter), they make very limited use of primary sources of any kind, and no use at all of Colonial Office records. The lack of empirical underpinning inevitably casts doubt on the validity of some of the interpretations advanced in these studies about the objectives of colonial language policy. The second major limitation is that they examine language policy in isolation from education policy, which itself reflected the British government's general policy towards Hong Kong. In other words, language policy tends to be treated in a contextual vacuum.

The third limitation is an extension of the second, for not only do these overviews fail to place language-related developments in the wider educational, political, economic and social setting, they also make no attempt to examine language in Hong Kong education in relation to policies and practices in other British colonies. In consequence, language policies and practices (and the problems and controversies which flowed from them) tend to be regarded as unique to Hong Kong rather than characteristic of general developments in colonial education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

At present, then, our knowledge of the history of language policy and practice in Hong Kong education is far from complete. The scholarly limitations (especially in terms of scope and sources) of the literature reviewed above point to the need for more ambitious and sophisticated historical research into language in Hong Kong education. Historical studies of this kind would serve two main purposes. In the first place, they would contribute to our limited knowledge of the nature and purposes of language policy and practice in British colonial education. In his seminal study, Howatt (1984) argues that the history of ELT forks into two streams at the beginning of the nineteenth century, one following the path of imperial expansion, the other following developments in teaching methodology in Europe. Howatt understandably elects to follow the latter stream, which is more limited in scope, rather than the former, which he admits is 'a vast subject that requires a separate series of studies in its own right' (ibid.: 71). To date, this 'vast subject' remains largely unexplored. In a recent study, Pennycook (1998: 22) laments the 'massive absence of discussion of ELT and colonialism' in applied linguistics and ELT, a state of affairs which he finds 'strange' given his view that ELT was not only a 'tool in the service of Empire' but was itself also 'a product of Empire'. Pennycook argues that since ELT was 'always a highly significant part of colonial policy' (ibid.: 20), studies of colonial language policy can

provide important insights into the more general operation of colonialism. Pennycook's account of colonial language policy in Hong Kong is examined in 6.2.3. Second, historical studies of language in Hong Kong education could serve a more practical purpose in that they would provide policy-makers and practitioners with new perspectives and insights which might profitably be used to inform debate about the role of English in Hong Kong education and society in the post-colonial era. It is with these two objectives in mind that the present study has been designed.

1.4 The present study

1.4.1 Objectives

This study explores the nature, purposes and consequences of language policies and practices in Hong Kong education between 1842 and 1913. In particular, it analyses the changing attitudes of the colonial and metropolitan governments towards the promotion of English-language education (*vis-à-vis* Chinese education) in the colony's school system during this formative period in Hong Kong's history. The study seeks to answer the following inter-related research questions:

1. What was the nature of language policies and practices in Hong Kong education between 1842 and 1913?
2. When, how and why did language policies and practices change?
3. What were the purposes of the language policies and practices that were adopted during this period?
4. What were the results of the language policies and practices that were adopted during this period?

1.4.2 Scope

The study of the history of language in Hong Kong education during the colonial era inevitably entails decisions about the period to be investigated. The history of Hong Kong under the British falls into two distinct periods. The first extends from the cession of the ‘barren island’ in 1842 to the surrender of the colonial government to the Japanese in 1941; the second encompasses the half century between the end of the Japanese occupation and the transfer of sovereignty in 1997. As sections 1.2 and 1.3 have revealed, language in education during the first century of colonial rule has received little scholarly attention, and so this period (unlike the more fully documented post-war era) appears to be especially deserving of systematic research.

This study examines the introduction and spread of English-language education in Hong Kong between 1842 and 1913. There are two reasons why this period was chosen in preference to the entire 1842-1941 period. First, while the 1842-1941 period offers interesting scope for tracing change over time, studying such a long time span would inevitably mean sacrificing depth of coverage in favour of breadth. It is hoped that limiting the study to around seventy years will allow for the full exploitation of the extant primary data, but at the same time provide sufficient scope for analysing change over time. Second, in terms of policy and practice, investigating the period before 1913 can be justified on the grounds that (in hindsight) it constitutes a coherent period in the educational histories of both Hong Kong and the British Empire. From the perspective of Hong Kong, 1913 is an appropriate end-point as this year witnessed the enactment of the first Education Ordinance, which vested the government with powers of inspection and supervision – and therefore a degree of control – over all the colony’s schools. This measure was unprecedented in the Empire. From the perspective of the Empire, the First World War marks a watershed in the

history of colonial education (Watson, 1982a). The period before the war is often characterised as the *laissez-faire* era in British colonial education in that the metropolitan government is believed to have taken little interest in educational development, apparently leaving matters of policy and practice to colonial governments and missionary bodies in the periphery (Mayhew, 1938). After the war, the Colonial Office, through its Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies, showed a greater inclination to address educational problems in the Empire (Whitehead, 1991). Although the Advisory Committee did little to alter the fundamentally decentralised character of British colonial education, it nevertheless provided a forum for the investigation and consideration of educational problems, such as the crucial issue of language in education. The results of these studies and discussions were disseminated to Directors of Education throughout the Empire, who were at liberty to act upon or ignore the Committee's advice. The absence of such a forum during the so-called *laissez-faire* era means that the best sources of information about colonial language policies and practices during this largely uncharted period are the educational records of individual colonies, a point which underlines the need for detailed case studies of the kind presented in this thesis.

1.4.3 Terminology

(i) Language policy and practice

This study investigates the roles of the colonial and metropolitan authorities in the introduction and spread of English-language education in Hong Kong. The study therefore focuses on decisions made at various levels in Hong Kong and London about the teaching and learning of English (*vis-à-vis* Chinese) in the colony's education system. These decisions involved the resolution of such fundamental questions as when and where to

introduce English-language education, in what dosage, for how long, to whom, and for what purposes. The crucial issue, as far as the present study is concerned, is not whether these decisions were right or wrong, but how and where they were made, by whom, and – most important – why. This study is therefore primarily concerned with *language policy* at the macro level.

Although *language policy* is the primary focus of the study, it will be noted that the terms *language policy* and *language practice* have been used throughout this chapter. The use of the term *language practice* in addition to *language policy* is motivated by two considerations. In the first place, the testimony of Ormsby-Gore and Crocker in 1.1.1 calls into question the applicability of the term policy to British colonial education, certainly in the sense of a plan of action or a set of principles which has been arrived at after careful investigation and deliberation, and is meticulously set out in an official document. In the likely absence of explicit (or even implicit) statements of policy, it will be necessary to reconstruct policy from what is known of actual practice (which, it is worth noting, is sometimes retrospectively rationalised into policy). Information about the nature of *language practice* in Hong Kong education can be extrapolated from a variety of official/unofficial sources: government statistics (e.g. enrolments, expenditure), curricula and syllabi, examination papers, textbooks, student work, methods of teaching and learning, the views and reminiscences of administrators, teachers and students. The second reason for the use of the term *language practice* is the gulf that often exists in education between policy and practice. The existence of a policy is no guarantee that it will in fact be translated into practice, as the history of language in post-war Hong Kong education so strikingly illustrates.

(ii) English-language education

The education system in Hong Kong has traditionally provided two contexts in which Chinese students can acquire/learn English: (1) *English-medium instruction* (i.e. the use of English as the medium of written and spoken communication in content subjects) and (2) *English language teaching* (i.e. the teaching and learning of English as a language subject).

It would appear from the sources that in the period under consideration, educators and administrators did not distinguish clearly between English-medium instruction (EMI) and English language teaching (ELT). One of the most interesting questions posed by this study is whether the colonial government (and other agencies) regarded the diffusion of Western knowledge or the promotion of the English language as the primary purpose of English-medium instruction. Another interesting question concerns the motivation of Chinese students who attended the colony's English-medium schools: were they primarily interested in mastering the *content* or the *language* of instruction? In this study the term *English-language education* refers to *education in and about the English language*. This definition thus embraces both the promotion of Western education through the medium of English and the teaching and learning of English as a subject.

1.4.4 Sources

Like any piece of historical research, this study draws on a range of primary and secondary sources. Chapters One and Two are mainly based on secondary sources, although some material has been drawn from published primary sources (notably Zastoupil and Moir, 1999). Chapters Three to Six are largely based on unpublished primary sources, the most important of which are government reports, Colonial Office records and periodicals.

(i) Government reports on education

These reports were published annually in the *Hong Kong Blue Books (HKBB)* or the *Hong Kong Government Gazette (HKGG)*. The textual and statistical data in these reports provide the bedrock on which the study was constructed. Copies of the *HKBB* and the *HKGG* are available in the Special Collections section of the Main Library at Hong Kong University.

(ii) Colonial Office records

This material includes hand-written despatches sent by the governors of Hong Kong to the Colonial Office in London, memoranda prompted by the despatches written by Colonial Office officials, and the replies of the Secretary of State (whose contents were generally founded on the recommendations of his senior officials). These confidential records reveal the views of the colonial and metropolitan governments on the teaching of English and Chinese, and thus provide important evidence of the various motives which underlay language policy in Hong Kong. Colonial Office correspondence is available in microform at Hong Kong University.

(iii) Periodicals

Articles, editorials and letters in contemporary journals and newspapers provide evidence of day-to-day issues and events relating to language in education. This study draws on material from periodicals such as the *Chinese Repository* (CR), the *China Mail* (CM), the *Hong Kong Daily Press* (HKDP) and the *Hong Kong Telegraph* (HKT). The CR contains the annual reports of the Morrison Education Society, which operated Hong Kong's first Anglo-Chinese school. Material from these reports is used in section 3.3, which explores language policies and practices in the mission schools. Chapters Five and Six make extensive use of facts and opinions derived from contemporary newspapers. Of particular value are verbatim reports of governors' speeches at Queen's College. These addresses, which were delivered at its annual prize giving ceremony, provide important evidence of official thinking on the study and use of English in the colony. The periodicals used in the study are available (in microform) in the Hong Kong Collection at Hong Kong University.

(iv) Other sources

The study has drawn on a number of other sources, including reports by various official bodies, government statistics, pamphlets, examiners' reports, memoirs, biographies, private papers, students' work. A complete list of primary sources is given in the References section.

Chapter Two

Language in British colonial education

The previous chapter noted the virtual absence of empirical studies of language policies and practices in British colonial education in the fields of applied linguistics and ELT. The lack of interest among language experts and practitioners in these questions means that, to date, we have had to rely mainly on scholars working in colonial education studies for our still very limited knowledge of language education in the Empire. While scholars in this field acknowledge the importance of language issues and problems, since their interests primarily lie in general education, developments in language policy and practice tend not to receive the attention they merit. One important consequence of this neglect is that at present we have no interpretive historical overview of language policies and practices in the British Empire. This is the purpose of the following chapter. Using a mixture of primary and secondary sources, it explores the nature, purposes and effects of colonial language policies and practices in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By identifying and analysing the central issues and problems of language in colonial education during this period, it seeks to provide the necessary historical backcloth against which to view policies and practices in Hong Kong education between 1842 and 1913. The first section examines language policies and practices in nineteenth-century India, with a particular focus on the seminal Orientalist-Anglicist controversy of the 1830s. The second section analyses the impact of the British experience in India on policies and practices in the Far East. The third section focuses on the reorientation in British policy during the inter-war years in the light of developments in Africa before the First World War. The chapter concludes with a reassessment of the nature, purposes and consequences of language policies and practices in the British Empire.

2.1 British language policies and practices in India

2.1.1 Macaulay and the promotion of English-language education in India

In a note at the end of his chapter on the ‘colonial linguistic inheritance’, Phillipson (1992: 133) points out that ‘Macaulay’s role in the elaboration of educational policy has tended to be exaggerated and misunderstood’. While a good deal of evidence exists to support Phillipson’s observation, critics might reasonably argue that nowhere are these tendencies more in evidence than in his own account of Macaulay’s role in the promotion of English in British India. Phillipson claims that Macaulay’s ‘formulation of the goals of British educational policy’ in his famous Minute ‘ended’ the bitter controversy between the Anglicists and Orientalists over the content and medium of Indian education (ibid.: 110). By strongly siding with the Anglicist faction, Macaulay ensured that funding would be devoted solely to the advancement of English-language education, a decision which Phillipson believes ‘firmly slammed the door on indigenous traditions of learning’ (ibid.: 110). According to Phillipson, Macaulay’s ‘strategy’, which was apparently endorsed at the Imperial Conferences of 1913 and 1923, had far-reaching consequences for educational development in the Empire. To illustrate this, Phillipson cites a senior figure in the British Council (A.H. King), who in an article in the early 1960s apparently claimed that Macaulay ‘determined what we should do, quite literally, from Hong Kong to the Gambia’ (ibid.: 111). Several pages later, however, Phillipson cites another senior British Council official, George Perren, who maintains that ‘Macaulay had little influence’ on British policy (ibid.: 115). Phillipson chooses not to discuss the implications of Perren’s testimony, even though it is clearly at variance with his own account of Macaulay’s ‘seminal influence’ on educational development in the Empire. Another inconsistency appears at the end of his chapter on colonial education, where Phillipson notes that the policy embodied in the

Minute was ‘a *fait accompli* by the time Macaulay reached India, and never fully implemented’ (ibid.: 33-34). This contradicts the arguments Phillipson advances earlier in his chapter, where he leaves no doubt that Macaulay was the principal formulator of a policy that resulted in the curtailment of traditional Indian education and the imposition of English as the sole medium of instruction. The relegation of these brief qualifying remarks to an endnote is perhaps evidence of Phillipson’s reluctance to present a full and objective assessment of Macaulay’s role in Indian education lest it undermine the force of his study’s central thesis, that the spread of English in the Empire was the outcome of a colonialist conspiracy. As was noted in Chapter One, this interpretation of British motives in India and elsewhere, though in some respects quite valid, does not always accord comfortably with the evidence.

As was intimated above, there is considerable evidence to suggest that Macaulay’s role in the promotion of English-language education in India has tended to be overstated. The testimony of Arthur Mayhew, a senior administrator in India (Whitehead, 1997), indicates that this tendency to magnify the Minute’s importance was apparent well before the end of British rule:

Macaulay by his eloquence and wealth of superlatives has often been made solely responsible for cutting off Indian education from the roots of national life. Let it be remembered here that he was not the prime mover, that his intervention was late and that the forces which he represented would probably have been successful without his singularly tactless and blundering championship. (Mayhew, 1926: 12-13)

A decade later, Spear (1938: 83) reached a similar conclusion, though in more poetic language: ‘Macaulay has been too much praised and too much blamed; his contribution was like the lightning flash which vividly illumines the storm and reveals the landscape, albeit in fantastic proportions and bewildering lights, but which neither directs its course nor ordains its conclusion.’ Recent scholarship has also tended to downplay Macaulay’s influence. In a

study of educational development in Madras, Frykenberg (1988: 312) apparently found no reference to Macaulay's Minute in government records, either around the time of its composition or in the decade which followed, leading him to conclude that the Minute had 'virtually no impact' in southern India.

This section assesses the merits of these divergent interpretations of Macaulay's role in the introduction and spread of English-language education in British India. It begins by examining the background to the Orientalist-Anglicist controversy, then moves on to analyse the content and purpose of his Minute, and finally assesses its impact on language policies and practices on the subcontinent before the First World War.

2.1.2 Orientalism in British India

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the East India Company gave little encouragement to educational development on the Indian subcontinent (Benson, 1972), and was particularly opposed to the introduction of English-language education, either by governmental or missionary agencies, on the grounds that the diffusion of Western knowledge and ideas would exert a potentially subversive influence on traditional Indian society and culture (David, 1984; Rahim, 1986). During this period, government-sponsored initiatives in Indian education, such as the establishment of the Calcutta Madrasa in 1780 and the Sanskrit College in 1791, were exclusively concerned with the promotion of Oriental learning in Sanskrit and Arabic, the repositories of the sacred literature of the Hindu and Muslim communities, and Persian, the polite language of the upper classes and, until its replacement by English, the official language of government and the law (Spear, 1938). The Company's patronage of traditional Oriental studies, albeit on a modest scale, was one manifestation of the prevailing policy of Orientalism, which was the official

ideology and unofficial mood of British India from the time of Warren Hastings (1773-1785), whose Governor-Generalship inaugurated British rule on the subcontinent, until the arrival of the liberal reformer William Bentinck (1828-1835), whose Governor-Generalship witnessed a decisive shift towards Anglicism in official circles (Rosselli, 1974).

The policy of Orientalism interwove the Company's political need to reconcile Indians to the emerging British Raj (Viswanathan, 1989) with the scholarly interest of individual British officials in Indian languages and culture (Pachori, 1990). Aware of the fragile basis of British power in India, Hastings (the policy's progenitor) believed that effective governance depended on the presence of an elite corps of acculturated British officials, who, through their sympathetic understanding of Indian institutions, laws and customs, would exercise power in the manner of traditional Indian rulers (Kopf, 1969). The convergence of British political and intellectual interests is revealed in the establishment of the Calcutta Madrasa, to which Hastings contributed personally, and the Sanskrit College at Benares, which owed its foundation to the Company official Jonathan Duncan. Though sharing Hastings' fascination with Oriental studies, Duncan was acutely conscious of the political benefits which the fledgling British regime might derive from the college, notably 'its Tendency towards endearing our Government to the native Hindoos' (reproduced in Zastoupil and Moir, 1999: 78). Through its patronage of the two institutions, the Company signalled its willingness to uphold the scholarly traditions of its Islamic and Hindu predecessors, a policy that was intended to conciliate influential sections of the Indian community by demonstrating British respect and admiration for indigenous languages and culture. Other manifestations of the administration's Orientalist policy during this period were the founding of the Asiatic Society of Bengal (1784), through the initiative of the renowned Persian scholar Sir William Jones, and the establishment of the College of Fort

William (1800), which, though primarily intended as a training school for Company officers, quickly developed into an important centre of linguistic research and cultural exchange, and was to prove instrumental in shaping and spreading the Orientalist ideology which imbued British administration before the arrival of reformist officials such as Bentinck, Macaulay and Trevelyan (Kopf, 1969; Pachori, 1990).

Despite growing pressure for the introduction of Western knowledge and the English language, during the first two decades of the nineteenth century British policy in India retained a predominantly Orientalist character. Influenced by Hastings' policy of conciliation, administrators such as Munro, Malcolm and Elphinstone believed that Britain's mission in India was to reinvigorate rather than replace Indian civilisation, and to this end argued that education policy should be directed towards the improvement of Oriental studies for the influential classes in society. Though convinced of the superiority of Western learning, officials in the 1820s believed that European arts and sciences should be gradually 'engrafted' on to traditional Indian education for the learned elites, who would then act as cultural intermediaries between the British and the masses (Zastoupil and Moir, 1999).

An early exponent of this policy of 'engraftment' was the Company administrator, Holt Mackenzie, who in a Note dated 17 July 1823 advocated 'the association of oriental learning with European Science, and the gradual introduction of the latter, without any attempt arbitrarily to supersede the former' (reproduced in Zastoupil and Moir, 1999: 100). Unlike some of his more conservative colleagues, Mackenzie cautiously favoured the introduction of English teaching in the government colleges, but was careful to point out that 'It would scarcely be consistent to make any effort at general instruction in English, unless the gradual introduction of it as the official language of the country were

contemplated' (ibid.: 102). Mackenzie's belief that the adoption of English as the official language would provide an impetus to the study and use of English echoed that of a far more zealous advocate of Western education, Charles Grant, who in the 1790s had argued that the use of English in government business would create a strong demand for English-language education in the principal administrative centres of British India. In the 1830s, Bentinck and Macaulay were also acutely aware that the shift from Persian to English in the political and legal domains would have far-reaching consequences for the teaching and learning of English on the subcontinent.

The notion of engraftment lay at the heart of the Company's education programme during the 1820s, and (as we shall see) was to form the basis of the Orientalists' case in their dispute with Macaulay in the following decade. In accordance with this policy, the General Committee of Public Instruction (GCPI) in Bengal cautiously introduced modern science and English at the Calcutta Madrasa and the Sanskrit College, and established new colleges at Calcutta, Agra and Delhi whose curricula were intended to blend Indian and Western learning (Zastoupil and Moir, 1999). However, the pace and nature of change disappointed reformers in Calcutta and London, who believed that the Orientalist faction on the GCPI, notably its principal advocate, H.H. Wilson, had little real desire to promote Western education (Sirkin and Robinson Sirkin, 1971). Impatience with the progress of engraftment in the government colleges was one manifestation of a growing sense of disenchantment with the wider policy of Orientalism among a new generation of officials, merchants and missionaries, who, confident in the supremacy of British power, culture and religion, increasingly came to believe that Britain's mission on the subcontinent involved the complete transformation of Indian culture and society through the agencies of English-language education and Christianity (Metcalf, 1995).

2.1.3 Anglicism in British India

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Hastings' view that Europeans should assimilate themselves to their surroundings through the sympathetic study of Indian languages and culture gradually gave way to the belief that Indians should become acquainted with Western knowledge and the English language in order to assimilate themselves to their rulers (Clive, 1973). At the forefront of the campaign to anglicise Indian education and society, and indeed the driving force behind the hardening of British attitudes towards Oriental civilisations, was the evangelical movement, which in the last two decades of the eighteenth century was becoming increasingly influential in the Company, in Parliament, and in British public life generally (Porter, 1999).

In India, evangelical fervour found expression in the work of the Company official, Charles Grant, who, like others in the movement, believed that the introduction of Western education and Christianity would transform a morally decadent society. These views are apparent in his influential treatise, *Observations on the State of Society among the Asiatic Subjects of Great Britain* (1792), which was written to support the evangelical campaign to persuade Parliament, prior to the Company's charter renewal, to open India to the proselytising and educational activities of the missionary societies. The proposal was rejected in 1793, but when Parliament debated the Company's charter twenty years later, the evangelical movement, led by Wilberforce and Grant, was able to secure the inclusion of a clause which legalised missionary work in British India (Adams and Adams, 1971), a measure that was to have a significant impact on the spread of English-language education on the subcontinent.

In his *Observations*, Grant argued that education was the key to the transformation of Indian society:

The true cure of darkness, is the introduction of light. The Hindoos err, because they are ignorant; and their errors have never fairly been laid before them. The communication of our light and knowledge to them, would prove to be the best remedy for their disorders ... (reproduced in Zastoupil and Moir, 1999: 83).

The central issue for Grant, as it would be for Macaulay in the 1830s, was the medium through which this 'light and knowledge' should be imparted. Like his more illustrious successor, Grant argued for the adoption of English as the language of instruction on the grounds that it would provide direct access to the superior arts, philosophy and faith of Britain: 'The first communication, and the instrument of introducing the rest, must be the English language: this is a key which will open to them a world of new ideas' (ibid.: 84-85). Grant believed that the diffusion of English-language education would 'silently undermine, and at length subvert, the fabric of error' that enveloped Indian society (ibid.: 84), a process that would ultimately lead to its moral and intellectual regeneration. To encourage the study and use of English, Grant urged the authorities to introduce English as the language of government and (to meet the demand that would invariably arise from this change) to establish Free schools providing instruction in the language. Grant's belief that the introduction of the 'language of the conquerors' would be 'an obvious means of assimilating the conquered people to them' (ibid.: 85) espoused a vision of Britain's imperial mission that was diametrically opposed to the prevailing policy of conciliation, and (in retrospect) may be regarded as an early manifestation of the shift in British attitudes towards India, from interest and appreciation to criticism and disdain, that was to build in momentum in the early decades of the nineteenth century.

Grant's proposals for the promotion of English-language education in India were similar to those of Macaulay four decades later. Although, as Ghosh (1995) notes, we have no direct evidence that he had read Grant's tract, given the nature of Macaulay's upbringing,

education and associations, it is inconceivable that he had not studied *Observations* before penning his Minute. Macaulay's father, Zachary, was a prominent figure in the Clapham sect, an influential evangelical network whose membership included Grant and Wilberforce, and in the early 1830s Grant's son, Charles Jr., was one of Macaulay's closest political associates. In fact, Charles Jr. was President of the Board of Control for India at the time of Macaulay's selection as one of its commissioners in June 1832, an appointment which precipitated Macaulay's involvement in Indian affairs (Clive, 1973).

Although the evangelical movement provided the initial anglicising impulse, pressure for the introduction of Western education in India came from other British groups during the 1820s. The most influential of these were the advocates of free trade and utilitarianism, whose views on the need to transform a static, degraded society through the infusion of European ideas and practices echoed those of Grant and others in the evangelical movement (Spear, 1938). The utilitarian view of Indian society was reflected in the *History of British India* (1817) by James Mill, who occupied a senior position in the Company's London offices between 1819 and 1836. Mill's influence is evident in a February 1824 despatch which he drafted on behalf of the Court of Directors about the curricula at the Calcutta Madrasa and the Sanskrit College. In the despatch, Mill criticised the GCPI's policy of engraftment, arguing that the 'great end should not have been to teach Hindoo learning, or Mahomedan learning, but useful learning' (reproduced in Zastoupil and Moir, 1999: 116). Although Mill shared Grant's contempt for Oriental learning, he was by no means convinced that English was an appropriate medium for the diffusion of 'useful' knowledge. Unlike Grant, who advocated complete immersion in English as the means to enlightenment, Mill believed that modern European learning could be communicated more effectively through translations of English texts into the Indian vernacular languages rather

than through direct study of the originals (Zastoupil, 1994). Although Mill apparently favoured a vernacular education policy, when assessing his contribution to the debate over language policy, it is worth noting that (unlike Grant) he had little faith in the transformative potential of education, believing that the institution of a rational system of laws rather than the introduction of English teaching was the key to the improvement of Indian society (Clive, 1973).

Mill's despatch elicited a vigorous reaction from the Orientalist-dominated GCPI, who, in a letter of 18 August 1824, claimed that the state of public feeling in Bengal was 'still an impediment to any general introduction of western literature or science' (reproduced in Zastoupil and Moir, 1999: 121). Although the GCPI observed that the 'prejudices of the natives against European interference with their education in any shape are considerably abated', it cautioned that these prejudices 'might very easily be roused by any abrupt and injudicious attempts at innovation' (ibid.: 121). In formulating its response, the GCPI appears to have taken particular account of the sensitivities of the traditional learned elites, who (according to the GCPI) evinced a good deal of antipathy to Western learning. The GCPI therefore concluded that the cooperation of these classes would have to be secured before any far-reaching educational reforms could be contemplated. While the GCPI's cautious stance in relation to the learned elites was entirely justified, what it chose not to do – and this was understandable given the predominance of Orientalists on the GCPI – was to report the mounting pressure for the introduction of English-language education from middle-class Hindus. In Calcutta, growing interest in Western education was reflected in the establishment in 1816 of Hindu College, a privately financed and managed institution of higher learning (Majumdar, 1955), while in Madras demand for English was manifested in the proliferation of private tutorial schools offering rudimentary

instruction in the language (Frykenberg, 1986). While much of this interest in English undoubtedly sprang from pragmatic considerations, there also existed a small but influential group of Indians, led by Rammohun Roy, who demanded not only the teaching of English as a language, but also the content of a modern English education, which they believed was the key to the revival of Indian culture (Zastoupil and Moir, 1999).

During the first two decades of the nineteenth century, therefore, the authorities came under increasing pressure from British and Indian reformers to promote Western learning and the English language on the subcontinent (Frykenberg, 1988). While officials with Orientalist sympathies were in the ascendant, both in government and on the GCPI, pressure for the introduction of English teaching could be (and was) resisted. In the late 1820s, however, Orientalist control over British cultural policy in India began to diminish following the appointment of a reformist Governor-General, William Bentinck, and the rise to prominence of Macaulay's future brother-in-law, Charles Trevelyan, a political officer with strong evangelical convictions. Bentinck's term in office (1828-1835) instituted a period of reform during which India was subjected to a battery of changes designed to convert its culture and institutions to Western norms and forms (Washbrook, 1999). These reforms included the abolition of widow suicide and female infanticide, the suppression of the Thugs, and Macaulay's celebrated Minute, which Phillipson claims finally resolved the Orientalist-Anglicist dispute over language policy in Indian education.

2.1.4 The Orientalist-Anglicist controversy

The circumstance which gave rise to Macaulay's entry into the controversy over Indian education was the interpretation of a clause in the Charter Act of 1813 which stipulated that, out of any surplus revenue, a sum of not less than one lac of rupees a year [about £10,000] should be set aside for 'the revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India, and for the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences among the inhabitants of the British Territories in India' (reproduced in Zastoupil and Moir, 1999: 91). In retrospect, the provisions of the Charter Act embody two characteristics that were to distinguish educational development in the Empire for the next 150 years. First, by (apparently) according equal emphasis to Western and Indian learning, the Act represented a compromise between two competing visions of Britain's mission on the subcontinent: the Anglicist vision of a moribund culture transformed by modern science and the Orientalist vision of an ancient culture revived by its traditional learned classes. The reluctance of the Act's framers to present a clear vision of the aims of education in India is perhaps the first instance of the confusion of purpose that was to characterise policy and practice throughout the history of British colonial education. From the perspective of the present study, the Hong Kong government's unwillingness to implement a clear language policy in the final decades of colonial rule might be taken as evidence that the spirit of the 1813 Charter Act lived on until the very end of the Empire. Second, by assigning a meagre sum from *surplus* revenue towards the realisation of these conflicting objectives, the Act provided early evidence of British parsimony in colonial education. Indeed, as Governor-General Auckland was to observe in his 1839 Minute on education, the controversy was as much the result of government penny-pinching as it was about abstract educational principles:

... insufficiency of the funds assigned by the State for the purposes of Public Instruction has been amongst the main causes of the violent disputes which have taken place upon the education question, and that if the funds previously appropriated to the cultivation of Oriental literature had been spared, and other means placed at the disposal of the promoters of English Education, they might have pursued their object aided by the good wishes of all. (reproduced in Zastoupil and Moir, 1999: 307)

As this chapter will reveal, many of the language-related problems in British colonial education sprang from the reluctance of officials to formulate and implement firm policies in relation to the respective roles of English and the vernacular languages. Though conscious of the need to promote English, British policy-makers were generally at pains (for pedagogical and/or political reasons) to emphasise that English should not be studied at the expense of the native languages. In many colonial contexts (and here the case of Hong Kong is instructive), the absence of a clear policy, or the disjunction between policy and practice, led to frequent complaints that the graduates of colonial schools tended to fall between two stools, both linguistically and culturally. The inability or reluctance of the British authorities to provide adequate funding for educational development merely compounded the language malaise which afflicted colonial education, a malaise which is perhaps traceable to the terms of the Charter Act.

A year after the passage of the Charter Act, the Court of Directors sent a despatch to the Bengal government offering guidance on the implementation of the Act's educational provisions. Although (as we have seen) these provided a degree of support for the introduction of modern science, the content and tone of the despatch are more reflective of the traditional Orientalist preoccupation with conciliation than the modernising aspirations of the Anglicists. The despatch is significant not only because it affords evidence of the Orientalists' ascendancy in the domain of cultural policy, but also because it reveals that from the outset political considerations were a central feature of British policy in India. In

framing their guidelines on educational development, the Directors emphasised that they had kept in view

those peculiar circumstances of our political relation with India which, having necessarily transferred all power and pre-eminence from native to European agency, have rendered it incumbent upon us, from motives of policy as well as from a principle of justice, to consult the feelings, and even yield to the prejudices, of the natives, whenever it can be done with safety to our dominions. (reproduced in Zastoupil and Moir, 1999: 94)

The Directors concluded their despatch by expressing the belief that any expenditure on education would be justified if it resulted in ‘an improved intercourse of Europeans with the natives’, a state of affairs which they felt would ‘produce those reciprocal feelings of regard and respect which are essential to the permanent interests of the British Empire in India’ (ibid.: 96).

Despite the political motivations which underlay the Directors’ early policy initiatives, such was the Company’s parsimony that little was accomplished until the establishment of the GCPI in 1823 (Clive 1973). In the decade that followed its inception, the GCPI (as we have seen) adhered to a policy of engraftment which involved the gradual introduction of Western science and English in the Oriental colleges under its auspices, an approach which reflected the ascendancy of the Orientalist faction headed by H.H. Wilson. The Orientalists were to remain the dominant influence on education policy in Bengal until 1833, when Bentinck appointed the ardent Anglicist Charles Trevelyan to the GCPI in place of Wilson, who had returned to England to take up the chair of Sanskrit at Oxford. Once appointed, Trevelyan immediately set about attacking the Oriental colleges, which, he described, perhaps with good reason (see Fisher, 1919), as ‘sleepy, sluggish, inanimate machines’ (cited in Hilliker, 1974: 282), and the Orientalist faction on the GCPI, whom he characterised as a group of self-interested antiquaries representative of uselessness and the ivory tower (Clive, 1973). At the same time, Trevelyan initiated a vigorous campaign in

support of the Anglicist cause in the Press, in which he publicised his controversial scheme to romanise the Indian vernaculars, and in private correspondence with Bentinck, in which he advocated the establishment of ‘our language, our learning, and ultimately our religion in India’ (cited in Seed, 1952: 71). Trevelyan also directed officials’ attention to the success of the English school run by the Scottish missionary, Alexander Duff, whose views on the moral and intellectual benefits that would flow from the spread of English not only coincided with those of Trevelyan, but were also redolent of the evangelical tradition stretching back to Grant (Dharmaraj, 1991). Despite the traditional association of Macaulay with the promotion of English in India, the evidence suggests that Trevelyan’s energy and persistence were fundamental to the success of the Anglicist campaign during the 1830s (Hilliker, 1974). Indeed, according to Clive (1973), such was Trevelyan’s influence that the ‘battle’ between the Anglicists and Orientalists had largely been ‘fought’ and ‘won’ before Macaulay set foot in India.

While Trevelyan’s passionate espousal of the virtues of Western education provided Bentinck with the moral and intellectual justification for reform, ideals and principles were not the only factors behind the shift towards an English-oriented policy during the 1830s. As would prove to be the case in other contexts, British policy in India was also determined by what Carlyle several decades later was to term the ‘dismal science’. In consequence of the parlous state of the Company’s finances, Bentinck was sent to India with strict instructions to cut administrative costs prior to the charter renewal in 1833 (Philips, 1977). One of Bentinck’s principal means of achieving this was to replace British expatriates with cheaper Indian functionaries in the judicial and administrative branches of government. To this end, Bentinck was able to secure the inclusion of a clause in the 1833 Charter Act opening up all government posts to qualified persons ‘irrespective of religion, birth, descent

or colour' (cited in Adams and Adams, 1971: 167). While this measure sprang in part from a growing conviction that Indians should participate in government, the fact that Europeans monopolised high office for the greater part of the Raj (despite the Act's apparently liberal provisions) indicates that the policy was primarily motivated by the Company's pressing need to reduce expenditure. Bentinck's policy to make greater use of Indians in the public sector was inextricably linked to his policy to adopt English as the official language in place of Persian. The gradual introduction of English in government during the 1830s, and (particularly) the Company's announcement in 1844 that English-educated Indians would receive preferential treatment in public-sector appointments, fuelled the already existing demand for English in the centres of British administration in India (Mukherjee, 1989). The rapid upsurge in interest in English teaching which resulted from these measures provides an early illustration of the vital significance of the official language in shaping language-in-education policy in the Empire.

The Orientalist-Anglicist controversy finally came to a head in 1834, when Trevelyan and other reformers on the GCPI (whose numbers had been swelled by Bentinck) proposed replacing Sanskrit and Arabic studies with English-language instruction at Agra College. These proposals, which the reformers intended to implement in the other government-aided colleges, provoked a deep division of opinion between the Anglicists and Orientalists on the GCPI. Since the two factions were unable to reconcile their differences, it was decided that the dispute should be settled by the Governor-General on the basis of policy statements submitted by the two groups (Zastoupil and Moir, 1999).

In their submission (21 January 1835), the Anglicists sought to justify their proposed reforms by affirming the superiority of European literature and science over traditional Oriental learning, a position which had long been held by evangelicals and utilitarians, and

one indeed with which their adversaries most readily concurred. As Grant had done, the Anglicists argued that Western knowledge should be imparted through the medium of English, thereby enabling Indians to engage in a direct intellectual dialogue with Europeans, rather than (as Mill had advocated) by means of translations, a process which they considered to be slow and inefficient. It is important to note, however, that the Anglicists' English-medium immersion programme was intended solely for the influential classes rather than the masses, whom they believed should be taught through the media of the vernacular languages. Indeed, the Anglicists claimed that one of the ultimate objectives of their programme was the cultivation of the Indian vernaculars through the agency of the English-educated elite:

... it is most fully admitted that the great body of the people must be enlightened through the medium of their own languages, and that to enrich and improve these, so as to render them the efficient depositories of all thoughts and knowledge, is an object of the first importance. (reproduced in Zastoupil and Moir, 1999: 140-141)

In their submission the following day, the Orientalists argued that the Anglicists' plan to divert funds from Oriental studies to courses in English literature and science not only contravened the educational provisions of the 1813 Charter Act, but also overturned the policy of engraftment which the GCPI had been steadily pursuing since its inception a decade earlier. Although the Orientalists believed that the introduction of Western learning was 'the surest means of promoting Civilization and its concomitant blessings', they deprecated 'any crude sudden sweeping innovation as having a tendency to defeat rather than promote the object in view' (ibid.: 158). On the question of language instruction, they doubted if 'the mere teaching the English Language would make the youth of India wiser or better', and although they advocated 'the means of such Instruction being placed within the reach of all' they 'would not render recourse to it compulsory in any way' (ibid.: 158).

Although the two submissions revealed sharply divergent views about the future direction of British policy in India, on two central issues the Orientalists and Anglicists were in broad agreement. First, both groups favoured the introduction and spread of European literature and science. Second, both parties believed that the ultimate objective of British policy should be the development of vernacular education for the masses, based on a vernacular literature enriched by the infusion of Western knowledge and ideas (Clive, 1973). Both groups agreed that the Indian vernacular languages, in their present condition, were inadequate media for the teaching of modern subjects. The issue at the heart of the Orientalist-Anglicist dispute was therefore the best means of revitalising the vernaculars given the limited funds that the government was prepared to make available for educational development.

As a result of the impasse on the GCPI, Bentinck referred the issue to Macaulay, who had arrived in India in June 1834 to take up the post of legal member of the Governor-General's council. The consequences are well known: Macaulay duly penned his Minute of 2 February 1835 in support of the Anglicist cause; Bentinck, stirred into action by the force of Macaulay's rhetoric, promptly issued a resolution signalling that henceforth the great object of British policy in India would be the promotion of European learning and the English language; and for the next hundred years language-in-education policy in the Pax Britannica was founded on the principles that Macaulay had so eloquently expounded in his Minute.

In fact, the evidence suggests that Bentinck had made his decision on language policy several months before the Minute was written. For example, in a letter of 7 December 1834, Macaulay gleefully informed his sister that the Anglicists 'now consider the victory as gained' in the educational controversy, and that Bentinck intended 'very

speedily' to pronounce a decision in their favour on all the points at issue (cited in Clive, 1973: 365). A careful reading of the Minute also provides clear evidence that Macaulay was fully apprised of Bentinck's intentions: 'If the decision of His Lordship in Council should be such as I anticipate, I shall enter on the performance of my duties with the greatest zeal and alacrity' (reproduced in Zastoupil and Moir, 1999: 172). What also tends to be overlooked in the more simplistic accounts of the Minute's influence on Indian education is that a number of Macaulay's proposals were discarded or modified in the aftermath of its publication. However, before we examine the consequences of the Minute, both in the short and long terms, we need to analyse the arguments which formed the basis of Macaulay's case.

2.1.5 Macaulay's Minute

Since the decision to promote English education had been taken well before the Minute's composition, Macaulay's purpose was essentially to justify the policy which had already been agreed upon rather than to persuade Bentinck to support the Anglicist position. Macaulay was aware that in formulating its policy the GCPI was bound by section 43 of the Charter Act of 1813, which (as we have seen) required the Company to encourage both Western and Oriental learning. While the Anglicists' project accorded with the Act's stipulation that funds be assigned for 'the introduction and promotion of a knowledge of the sciences', it was apparently at variance with its requirement that education policy should also be directed towards 'the revival and improvement of literature, and the encouragement of the learned natives of India'. Though perhaps not an explicit statement of British intentions, it was generally accepted that the latter objective envisaged the revival and improvement of Arabic and Sanskrit literature rather than English literature. Macaulay's

first task was therefore to address the terms of the Charter Act, which (as the government's legal member) he must have recognised provided little justification for the course he was advocating. Indeed, as Spear (1938) notes, the flimsiness of Macaulay's legal case – together with his own personal tendency to exaggerate in controversy (Clive, 1973) – accounts for the content and tone of the Minute: the withering attack on Indian learning, the source of its continuing notoriety, was intended to distract attention from the provisions of the Charter Act, which he knew provided the Orientalists with their strongest argument. Given the fragility of his case, it is not surprising that Macaulay addressed the legal issue in a perfunctory manner, brushing aside the Orientalists' arguments with what Spear (1938: 84) describes as 'an olympian statement of opinion that the Act of 1813 intended the exact opposite of what its words implied'.

Having concluded that the grant at the government's disposal could be used to promote learning 'in any way which may be thought most advisable' (reproduced in Zastoupil and Moir, 1999: 164), Macaulay proceeded to discuss the most useful way of employing it. Since all parties agreed that the vernacular languages contained 'neither literary nor scientific information' and were thus too 'poor and rude' to be used as instructional media, the GCPI was faced with a straightforward choice between Sanskrit/Arabic and English, the central question being, according to Macaulay, 'which language is the best worth knowing?' (ibid.: 165). Macaulay's case for English was founded on his belief in the intrinsic superiority of English literature and science over Indian learning, and on his conviction that a strong desire for English existed among certain segments of the Indian population.

Macaulay maintained that his low estimate of the value of Indian learning was shared by his adversaries in the Orientalist camp: 'I have never found one among them who

could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia' (ibid.: 165). According to Macaulay, the claims of English were hardly necessary to recapitulate. It stood pre-eminent among the languages of the West. Whoever knew English had 'ready access to all the vast intellectual wealth which all the wisest nations of the earth have created and hoarded in the course of ninety generations' (ibid.: 166). The important political and economic role which English was beginning to assume in India and in the emerging Empire also provided a strong justification for promoting education in the language:

In India, English is the language spoken by the ruling class. It is spoken by the higher class of natives in the seats of Govt. It is likely to become the language of commerce throughout the seas of the east. It is the language of two great European communities which are rising, the one in the south of Africa, the other in Australasia, – communities which are every year becoming more important and more closely connected with our Indian Empire. (ibid.: 166)

Thus, whether viewed from the perspective of Britain's growing imperial interests, or its value as the repository of a superior body of knowledge and thought, English was the language which Macaulay believed would be 'most useful to our native subjects' (ibid.: 166). The simple question before the British authorities was whether, when it was in their power to teach English, they would instead teach languages in which

there are no books on any subject which deserve to be compared to our own, whether, when we can teach European science, we shall teach systems which, by universal confession, wherever they differ from those of Europe differ for the worse, and whether, when we can patronize sound Philosophy and true history, we shall countenance, at the public expense, medical doctrines which would disgrace an English farrier, astronomy which would move laughter in girls at an English boarding school, history abounding with kings thirty feet high and reigns thirty thousand years long, and geography made of seas of treacle and seas of butter. (ibid.: 166)

To further support his case for English, Macaulay adduced two historical analogies, those of Renaissance England and eighteenth-century Russia, which (he claimed) provided

instances of backward societies transformed by the infusion of modern knowledge and ideas. Macaulay confidently predicted that the introduction of English-language education in India would reinvigorate indigenous learning in much the same way that the languages of classical antiquity had done in sixteenth-century England: 'What the Greek and Latin were to the contemporaries of More and Ascham, our tongue is to the people of India' (ibid.: 167). The analogy was not convincing, however: as the Orientalist Henry Prinsep argued in a Note (15 February) attacking Macaulay's scheme, in many respects Sanskrit and Arabic were to nineteenth-century Indians what Latin and Greek were to scholars in Renaissance Europe.

Apart from extolling the virtues of English literature and science *vis-à-vis* traditional Indian learning, Macaulay sought to justify his plan by arguing that Indians evinced a far stronger desire to learn English than Sanskrit or Arabic. In setting out his case, Macaulay challenged the time-honoured Orientalist argument that the promotion of Oriental studies helped to conciliate the influential classes in Indian society. Macaulay contended that 'unanswerable evidence' existed to prove that 'we are not securing the co-operation of the natives'; in fact, the policy of engraftment was having quite the opposite effect. For Macaulay, the 'state of the market' should determine language policy (ibid.: 168):

We are withholding from them the learning which is palatable to them. We are forcing on them the mock learning which they nauseate. This is proved by the fact that we are forced to pay our Arabic and Sanscrit [*sic*] students while those who learn English are willing to pay us. (ibid.: 168)

Having presented his case for English, Macaulay advanced the idea of 'downward filtration', which proposed that the meagre parliamentary grant be used to cultivate a class of anglicised Indians who would not only serve as cultural brokers between the British colonisers and their Indian subjects, but who would also refine and enrich the vernacular languages, thereby rendering them fit media for imparting Western learning to the masses:

In one point I fully agree with the Gentlemen to whose general views I am opposed. I feel with them that it is impossible for us, with our limited means, to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern – a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave it to refine the vernacular dialects of this Country, to enrich those dialects with terms of science borrowed from the western nomenclature, and to render them by degrees fit vehicles for conveying knowledge to the great mass of the population. (ibid.: 171)

While the sentence advocating the creation of an acculturated Indian elite is regarded as the epitome of cultural and linguistic imperialism, Macaulay's critics have tended to overlook the significance of the preceding sentence, which indicates that his controversial scheme was entirely dictated by government parsimony, and have similarly chosen to ignore the import of the following sentence, which reveals that the development of vernacular education constituted an important element in the Anglicists' project.

Macaulay accompanied his plan with three specific measures designed to 'strike at the root of a bad system'. Though careful to stress that existing interests should be respected, he nevertheless proposed that the Calcutta Madrasa and Sanskrit College (Calcutta) be abolished, that the printing of Arabic and Sanskrit books be discontinued, and that no further stipends be awarded to students wishing to pursue Oriental studies at the Delhi Madrasa and Sanskrit College (Benares). Macaulay concluded his Minute with a characteristically dramatic flourish, threatening to resign from his position as President of the GCPI if his proposals were rejected. He knew – as we do now – that this was an empty threat, and, as he anticipated, Bentinck immediately gave his 'entire concurrence' to the Minute.

In some accounts of British policy in India (e.g. Phillipson, 1992) Bentinck's approval of Macaulay's scheme is equated with implementation, its mere composition being apparently sufficient to ensure its widespread adoption during the long afternoon of the Raj.

What tends to be overlooked, however, is that many of Macaulay's proposals were abandoned or substantially modified in the months and years which followed the Minute's composition, and it is to these developments that we now turn.

2.1.6 Bentinck's Resolution

Bentinck appears to have been anxious to settle the controversy before his departure from India (Rosselli, 1974). As noted above, he gave the Minute his immediate assent, and to effect its speedy implementation, he deliberately prevented any discussion of Macaulay's scheme in the GCPI. Bentinck also suppressed the 15 February Note by the Orientalists' principal spokesman, Henry Prinsep, which exposed many of the flaws in Macaulay's case. Seed (1952) claims that Bentinck purposely withheld action on the education question until the very end of his term because he feared that the radical nature of the policy would arouse the opposition of the Court of Directors in London, upon whose blessing all policies ultimately depended. Seed further argues that the timing of Bentinck's decision was shaped by his experience in Madras in 1807, when he was dismissed from the Governorship for his alleged insensitivity to Indian customs. By introducing the controversial new policy on the eve of his departure, Bentinck perhaps calculated that he would succeed in avoiding a similar humiliation. Bentinck's decision to initiate a fundamental shift in language policy while leaving his successors to bear its controversial consequences might be compared with the Hong Kong government's announcement in March 1997, after decades of vacillation, that only around 100 secondary schools would be allowed to retain English as the medium of instruction, although it was not until several months later that the implications of *that* particular decision would be fully recognised.

Bentinck's underlying caution is evident in his Resolution of 7 March 1835 giving effect to the new policy. In accordance with Macaulay's proposals, the Resolution stated that 'the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India, and that all the funds appropriated for the purpose of education would best be employed on English education alone' (reproduced in Zastoupil and Moir, 1999: 195). However, in a significant departure from the Minute, Bentinck disavowed any intention to abolish any native college 'while the Native Population shall appear to be inclined to avail themselves of the advantages which it affords' (ibid.: 195). Although the Resolution stipulated that no further stipends be awarded for Oriental studies, it was careful to direct that native scholars already in receipt of government grants would continue to enjoy their allowances. Bentinck's concessions on these points seem to have been prompted by pressure from influential groups in Calcutta's Muslim and Hindu communities, who, upon hearing news of Macaulay's scheme, submitted petitions to the government protesting against the new policy. The Governor-General's softening stance towards Oriental studies a matter of weeks after expressing his 'entire concurrence' with the Minute would therefore appear to bear out Rosselli's (1974: 221) contention that 'Bentinck let Macaulay fire the rhetorical big guns while ensuring that vested interests suffered little actual damage'.

Notwithstanding Bentinck's compromises over the Oriental colleges and government stipends, the Resolution signalled a significant shift in language policy in that the teaching of English would henceforth be the principal objective of public education. To give effect to the new policy, the GCPI set about establishing English-medium schools in the major towns of Bengal using savings which resulted from the curtailment of its Oriental programmes (Zastoupil and Moir, 1999). It is important to note, however, that the

authorities in Calcutta formulated and began implementing the new policy on their own initiative rather than seeking prior approval from the Court of Directors. In fact, the documents relating to the new policy did not reach the Company's London offices until January 1836, that is, almost a year after Bentinck had given his initial assent to the Minute. It was not, however, until January 1841 that the controversy over Macaulay's Minute was finally laid to rest, and it would be a further thirteen years before the British produced, in the shape of Wood's Despatch, their definitive statement on language policy in India.

2.1.7 Auckland's Minute

The papers reporting the change of policy arrived in London a month after the publication in the *Asiatic Journal* of a letter by H.H. Wilson, which Zastoupil and Moir (1999) believe was part of a carefully orchestrated campaign by Orientalist sympathisers to reverse the Macaulay-Bentinck project. In his letter, Wilson combined a vigorous defence of the GCPI's policy of engraftment with a disdainful attack on the Anglicists' scheme to spread English, in which he implored British policy-makers not to resort to 'measures of spoliation to provide funds for rearing clerks and copyists' (reproduced in Zastoupil and Moir, 1999: 218). Wilson's views on the baneful consequences of the promotion of English-medium education appear to be highly prescient in the light of subsequent developments in the Empire:

... it is impossible to impart widely an English education of a high description, for, even if competent teachers in sufficient numbers could be salaried, their labours would be attended with a very inadequate result. The great body of those who are willing to engage in the study want the language and nothing more. Of the language, also, they want only as much as can be turned to a profit, – as will enable them to earn a subsistence. They have not the inclination, nor if they had the will, have they the leisure, to follow that protracted and persevering career, which alone can give them the mastery of that immense store of words ... which compose the unwieldy mass of the literature of England. (ibid.: 218)

In Wilson's view, the diffusion of Western knowledge could be better accomplished through the agency of the traditional learned classes, who possessed the time, interest and ability to appreciate the great works of English literature and science, rather than through a class of smatterers, who viewed English largely in terms of the worldly advantages it might be instrumental in conferring. Sensing the deleterious effects which might flow from the spread of English education, Wilson advised the GCPI to 'cultivate English soundly and circumscribedly, cultivate native literature liberally and judiciously, and seek to bring them into an intimate association as the joint vehicles of useful knowledge' (ibid.: 221). This advice, though couched in different terms, would be repeated down the years by educators and administrators in other British colonies, including Hong Kong, as they grappled with the problems that resulted from the indiscriminate spread of English education.

Wilson's ideas appear to have exerted a significant influence on the official charged with drafting the Court of Directors' response to the new policy, John Stuart Mill, who had joined his father in the Company's employ in the 1820s. In his despatch, Mill expressed the directors' objections to Bentinck's Resolution, which they believed represented a sudden and radical departure from the GCPI's successful and officially sanctioned policy of engraftment (Sirkin and Robinson Sirkin, 1973). The directors particularly deprecated the Anglicists' plans to reduce the number of Oriental stipends, to divert endowment funds from Oriental studies to English instruction, and to close down the GCPI's Oriental publication programme. Although the directors cautiously approved the opening of five English schools in Bengal, they were reluctant to sanction the widespread promotion of English-language education, recommending instead a return to the GCPI's well-established policy of 'not obtruding English instruction upon the people' (reproduced in Zastoupil and Moir, 1999: 230). Echoing Wilson, the directors argued that the demand for English among

certain classes of Indians sprang largely from short-term pragmatic considerations: 'Persons studying English from such motives are anxious to get employment with the lowest possible qualification, and, having obtained their object, seek for no further proficiency' (ibid.: 232).

Despatches from the Court of Directors could not be sent to Calcutta without the approval of the Board of Control, the Parliamentary body that oversaw the Company's administration in India. In accordance with this practice, Mill's proposed despatch was sent to the President of the Board, Sir John Hobhouse, in October 1836 after having received the directors' assent. Two months later, Hobhouse, an admirer of Macaulay, wrote to the Chairman of the Company, Sir James Carnac, expressing his strong objections to Mill's draft, which he complained was 'tainted with manifest partiality towards a Party [i.e. the Orientalists] whose mode of conducting the argument was anything but decorous' (reproduced in Zastoupil and Moir, 1999: 245). However, mindful of the need to avoid further controversy, Hobhouse (acting on the advice of Bentinck's successor, Lord Auckland) recommended that the Court of Directors refrain from passing judgement on the new policy. Though still supportive of Mill's views, Carnac accepted Hobhouse's suggestion, and in consequence the proposed despatch was withdrawn. Instead, the directors sent a brief despatch acknowledging receipt of the papers announcing the change of policy, but, in accordance with Hobhouse's wishes, avoided giving a definitive ruling (Clive, 1973). Meanwhile, the government in Bengal was coming under increasing pressure from influential sections of the Hindu and Muslim communities to reverse the cuts to Oriental studies instituted by Bentinck. Growing Indian agitation in Calcutta, together with the London authorities' reluctance to formulate an authoritative response, appear to have prompted Auckland to seek a compromise to the protracted dispute. Auckland presented his compromise settlement in a Minute of 24 November 1839. As we noted earlier, Auckland

recognised that money as much as principles lay at the heart of the controversy: government parsimony inevitably meant that choices had to be made about the allocation of funds. Auckland's resolution of the dispute thus involved ensuring that sufficient funds were made available to both Oriental and English studies, and that neither party was given reason to believe that its funds were being diverted for other purposes.

Auckland's Minute appears to have been instrumental in breaking the deadlock over language policy that had prevailed in London since Hobhouse's rejection of Mill's proposed despatch in late 1836. When – after a five-year delay – the Court of Directors finally delivered their verdict on the Macaulay-Bentinck project, Auckland's compromise formed the basis of their recommendations, particularly in relation to the issue of funding. In accordance with the Orientalists' demands, the directors signalled their 'firm conviction that the Funds assigned to each Native College or Oriental Seminary should be employed exclusively on instruction in, or in connexion with, that College or Seminary, giving decided preference within those Institutions to the promotion, in the first instance, of perfect efficiency in Oriental Instruction' (reproduced in Zastoupil and Moir, 1999: 334). The directors' support for Oriental studies was also manifested in their sanctioning of an annual grant to the Asiatic Society for printing Oriental works, and in their provision of scholarships to the Oriental colleges in proportion to their endowments. Although the directors reaffirmed Bentinck's declaration that the great object of British policy should be the promotion of European science and literature, they by no means endorsed the Macaulay-Bentinck view that such learning should be imparted exclusively through the medium of English. In keeping with the Despatch's spirit of compromise and inclusiveness, the directors stated that the dissemination of European knowledge could be effected 'by translations in the Vernacular tongues or, by means of the English Language' (ibid.: 335)

(the only reference to English in the entire document). In fact, the directors' circumspect pronouncement on the issue of the medium of instruction represented a significant retreat from the English-only policy propounded in the 1835 Resolution:

We forbear at present from expressing an opinion regarding the most efficient mode of communicating and disseminating European Knowledge. Experience does not yet warrant the adoption of any exclusive system. We wish a fair trial to be given to the experiment of engrafting European Knowledge on the studies of the existing learned Classes, encouraged as it will be by giving to the Seminaries in which those studies are prosecuted, the aid of able and efficient European Superintendence. At the same time we authorize you to give all suitable encouragement to translators of European works into the vernacular languages and also to provide for the compilation of a proper series of Vernacular Class books according to the plan which Lord Auckland has proposed. (ibid.: 335)

The Court of Directors' 1841 Despatch might therefore be regarded as a quintessentially British compromise in that it sought to balance the interests and claims of the Orientalist and Anglicist parties while at the same time forbearing from offering a definitive ruling on the language of instruction. Although the directors were careful to preserve or reinstate key elements of the Orientalists' traditional programme, the Despatch represented a 'victory' for the Anglicists since it confirmed that the primary goal of British policy was the dissemination of European literature and science. However, the directors' recommendation that Western learning be imparted by means of either the vernacular languages or English would have found favour with moderates in both parties since the development of vernacular education was an important long-term objective of both the Anglicists and the Orientalists (Education Commission, 1883). The fact that both parties shared similar overall aims on the question of vernacular education suggests that it may not be particularly illuminating to view the 1841 Despatch in terms of victory or defeat for either Orientalist or Anglicist viewpoints since, as Viswanathan (1989) has observed, the two positions should not be seen as polar opposites but as points along a continuum of

attitudes. Viewed from this perspective, the directors' Despatch of 1841 represented the final stage of a steady retreat – initiated by Bentinck's Resolution – from the extreme Anglicist position occupied by Macaulay in his Minute (Carson, 1999).

2.1.8 Wood's Despatch

Perhaps the most significant feature of the 1841 Despatch was the key role assigned to the vernacular languages in the diffusion of European learning. This increasing interest in vernacular education was an inevitable consequence of the search for common ground by the Orientalists and Anglicists in the aftermath of Macaulay's Minute. As we have seen, advocates from both parties, even those at the extremes of the debate like Macaulay and Wilson, were in broad agreement over the desirability of enriching the Indian vernacular languages and of employing them as instructional media. This emerging consensus over the need to promote vernacular education paved the way for the policy set out in Wood's landmark Despatch of 1854.

Wood's Despatch reaffirmed that the central objective of British policy in India was the diffusion of European knowledge. As in the past, the crucial question was the medium through which this learning should be communicated. Wood acknowledged that some students in the Presidency towns regarded 'a very moderate proficiency in the English language' as 'the end and object of their education rather than as a necessary step to the improvement of their general knowledge' (reproduced in Richey, 1922: 366). Although Wood did not deny the value of 'the mere facility of speaking and writing English', he feared that 'a tendency has been created in these districts unduly to neglect the vernacular' (ibid.: 366). This was a tendency that Wood entirely deprecated:

It is neither our aim nor desire to substitute the English language for the vernacular dialects of the country. We have always been most sensible of the importance of the use of the languages which alone are understood by the great mass of the population. (ibid.: 367)

Wood further maintained that in any general system of education, English should be taught

where there is a demand for it; but such instruction should always be combined with a careful attention to the study of the vernacular language of the district, and with such general instruction as can be conveyed through that language; and while the English language continues to be made use of as by far the most perfect *medium* for the education of those persons who have acquired a sufficient knowledge of it to receive general instruction *through* it, the vernacular languages must be employed to teach the far larger classes who are ignorant of, or imperfectly acquainted with English. [italics in the original] (ibid.: 367-368)

Wood thus envisaged an education system in which both English and the vernacular languages played important roles in the transmission of European learning:

We have declared that our object is to extend European knowledge throughout all classes of the people. We have shown that this object must be effected by means of the English language in the higher branches of institution [*sic*], and by that of the vernacular languages of India to the great mass of the people. (ibid.: 392)

Although Auckland's compromise settlement of the late 1830s had envisaged a dual role for English and the vernaculars, the 1854 Despatch represented a significant shift in British policy in that it abandoned the elitist policy of 'downward filtration' in favour of education for the masses, with English used as the principal medium of instruction at secondary and tertiary levels, and the vernacular languages used to impart European knowledge at elementary level. To give effect to the new policy, Wood recommended the introduction of a grants-in-aid system, which enabled private and missionary bodies to apply for government grants, and the establishment of English-medium universities in Calcutta, Bombay and Madras (Benson, 1972).

Wood's Despatch formed the basis of British language policy on the subcontinent until the passage of the Government of India Act of 1919, which transferred control of

education to Indian ministers and the provincial legislatures (Hartog, 1939). The Despatch's status as the definitive statement of British educational aims is underlined by the Indian Education Commission's landmark report of 1883, which expressed no wish to depart from Wood's dual language system, despite increasing evidence that elementary vernacular education was receiving less attention and funding than English or Anglo-vernacular secondary education, a state of affairs which the Commission – and similar bodies in other colonial contexts – claimed it decidedly did not wish to see.

When viewed from the wider perspective of education in the Empire, it could be argued that the principles set out in Wood's Despatch remained at the heart of British policy (if not practice) in Asia and Africa until the decolonisation process of the 1950s and 1960s. In this respect, the case of Hong Kong is illuminating, for on 30 June 1997, the final day of British rule, the colony's education system could be said to bear the imprint of Wood's Despatch (see also 6.4.4). In pre-handover Hong Kong, the vast majority of Chinese students received their primary education in the vernacular (Cantonese) before moving on to Anglo-vernacular schools for their secondary education, and (in a minority of cases) English-medium institutions for their tertiary studies. Furthermore, as was the case in nineteenth-century India, most schools in late colonial Hong Kong were administered by government-aided religious/charitable agencies, or by private organisations, who received no assistance but whose work was subject to official inspection. As in India, the government's role in the direct provision of education was strictly limited, as it had been throughout the colonial period.

One of the fundamental flaws in Hong Kong's post-war education system was the limited scope it offered for vernacular-medium studies at secondary and tertiary levels; this despite the government's apparently well-meaning attempt to stimulate Chinese education

through the establishment of the Chinese University in 1963. As we saw in Chapter One, the rapid expansion of Anglo-Chinese secondary education between the late 1970s and late 1990s was driven by the belief that proficiency in English was an important determinant of socio-economic mobility. Although at various times the government expressed the desire to provide greater opportunities for Chinese-medium secondary education, in practice it bowed to the strong parental demand for Anglo-Chinese education. The government thus allowed market forces to dictate language policy at secondary level, an approach which wholly accorded with its *laissez-faire* policy in social and economic affairs generally. Interestingly, this approach was a practical expression of Macaulay's belief that the 'state of the market' should be the 'decisive test' in determining language policy. The course of education in post-war Hong Kong, and in nineteenth-century India, provides evidence that popular demand rather than official policy was an important factor in shaping language choice and use in education. Although in both cases the promotion of vernacular education constituted a formally stated policy objective, the strong demand for English-medium education, coupled with official apathy and parsimony, resulted in the comparative neglect of mother-tongue education. As we shall see below, the overall effect of these developments was the emergence of a gulf between the rhetoric of policy documents and the reality of actual practice.

2.1.9 The effects of British language policies in India

The half century which followed the promulgation of Wood's Despatch saw a rapid increase in the number of English and Anglo-vernacular secondary schools. During the same period, elementary vernacular education remained at a low ebb in consequence of government neglect and parsimony, and Indian apathy (Mayhew, 1926). As was noted earlier, the spread of English-medium education during this period reflected the strong demand for English in the principal urban centres of British India. As in nineteenth-century Hong Kong, this demand sprang from an awareness that a smattering of English opened up the prospect of employment in the lower rungs of government or in European-controlled commercial organisations. The Indian students who attended English-medium schools were generally from the poorer classes in society (rather than the traditional learned elites), and were primarily interested in the language rather than the content of a Western education (McCully, 1966). Since their interest in English was largely motivated by occupational concerns, students tended to abandon their studies once they had acquired a rudimentary knowledge of the language in order to take up clerical positions in the public or private sectors. While this practice was deprecated by European educators in India and elsewhere in the Empire, it might be observed that students' modest workplace needs were not best served by the academic curriculum and examinations offered in many English schools, which, since they reflected current practice in British grammar schools, were wholly inappropriate for non-native students. As the century progressed, Indian students increasingly found that studying Milton or Locke in a foreign language was perhaps not ideal preparation for life as a copyist in a Calcutta merchant house.

Viswanathan (1989: 166-167) has argued that the promotion of the English literary canon in nineteenth-century India was a 'vital, active instrument of western hegemony in

concert with commercial expansion and military action'. While the exercise of cultural imperialism was undoubtedly one of the factors behind the promotion of English literature, perhaps a more plausible explanation for the adoption of the grammar-school curriculum is that this was the only form of education known to British policy-makers. In determining the content and methods of education in India, British officials were unable to draw on a rich body of knowledge on the theory and practice of teaching modern subjects in English to non-native students. Subsequent chapters will reveal that British administrators in Hong Kong regarded *English education* not so much as *education in or about the English language* but as *education as practised in England*, the belief presumably being that what was deemed suitable for native speakers in England would prove similarly appropriate for Cantonese speakers on the China coast. Many of the problems associated with *English education* in Hong Kong, India and elsewhere in the nineteenth century stemmed from the failure of British educators to recognise and address the fundamental difference between English-medium education in first and second/foreign language contexts.

By the turn of the century the deleterious consequences of the spread of English education in India were becoming increasingly apparent. From an educational perspective, the most serious effects of British policies and practices were the excessive emphasis on English teaching in the schools, the neglect of the vernacular languages as subjects and instructional media, and the unrealistically early introduction of English as a teaching medium. Despite the importance attached to the teaching and learning of English in the education system, the results were often found to be unsatisfactory. Disappointment with language standards in the English-medium stream is reflected in the report of the Indian Universities Commission of 1902. It is worth quoting at length from the report because the

problem it describes, both in terms of causes and effects, was by no means exclusive to India.

Notwithstanding the prominent position given to English throughout the course, the results are most discouraging. Students after matriculation are found to be unable to understand lectures in English when they join a college. In some cases the difficulty is said to disappear after a short time: but it appears to be the case that many students pass through the entire university course without acquiring anything approaching to a command of the language, and proceed to a degree without even learning to write a letter in English correctly and idiomatically. Even those who have acquired considerable facility in speaking and composition are ... lamentably deficient in pronunciation. The evil begins in the schools. The great object of parents and guardians is to pass their boys through the school course as rapidly as possible, and pressure is brought to bear on managers of schools to promote pupils regardless of their fitness for such promotion. Boys begin to learn English as a language, and also to learn other subjects through the medium of English, long before they are capable of understanding it, and in the lower classes are taught by ill-paid teachers, who have no claim to be regarded as qualified to teach the language. Faults acquired at this stage are seldom completely eradicated, and even when a boy reaches the higher classes of a high school, he is generally taught by a teacher whose vernacular is not English and who is wanting in the capacity to teach the language properly. Numbers of students reach the stage of matriculation without ever having heard an Englishman speak, and are incapable of understanding English as spoken by those whose mother-tongue it is. (cited in Nurullah and Naik, 1951: 526)

The educational problems stemming from the expansion of English education in the second half of the nineteenth century prompted a wide-ranging review of language policy during Lord Curzon's term as Viceroy (Bhutani, 1973). Interestingly, Curzon laid the blame for these failings at Macaulay's door: 'Ever since the cold breath of Macaulay's rhetoric passed over the field of Indian languages and textbooks, the elementary education of the people in their own tongue has shrivelled and pined' (cited in Adams and Adams, 1971: 170). Curzon's review resulted in the formulation in 1904 of a government Resolution on education policy, which sought to invigorate vernacular education along the lines envisaged in Wood's Despatch. As with the report of the Indian Universities Commission, it is worth quoting at length from the Resolution's position on language policy and practice since the

problems it describes and the principles it espouses were to be repeated in other British colonies, including Hong Kong.

It has never been part of the policy of the Government to substitute the English language for the vernacular dialects of the country. It is true that the commercial value which a knowledge of English commands, and the fact that the final examinations of the high schools are conducted in English, cause the secondary schools to be subjected to a certain pressure to introduce prematurely both the teaching of English and its use as a medium of instruction; while for the same reasons the study of the vernacular in these schools is liable to be thrust into the background. This tendency however requires to be corrected in the interest of sound education. As a general rule a child should not be allowed to learn English as a language until he has made some progress in the primary stages of instruction and has received a thorough grounding in his mother-tongue.

It is equally important that when the teaching of English has begun, it should not be prematurely employed as the medium of instruction in other subjects. Much of the practice, too prevalent in Indian schools, of committing to memory ill-understood phrases and extracts from text-books or notes, may be traced to the scholars' having received instruction through the medium of English before their knowledge of the language was sufficient to enable them to understand what they were taught. The line of division between the use of the vernacular and of English as a medium of instruction should, broadly speaking, be drawn at a minimum age of 13. No scholar in a secondary school should, even then, be allowed to abandon the study of his vernacular, which should be kept up until the end of the school course. If the educated classes neglect cultivation of their own languages, these will assuredly sink to the level of mere colloquial dialects possessing no literature worthy of the name, and no progress will be possible in giving effect to the principle, affirmed in the Despatch of 1854, that European knowledge should gradually be brought, by means of Indian vernaculars, within the reach of all classes of the people. (cited in Nurullah and Naik, 1951: 484)

The reorientation of language policy during this period was not, however, solely motivated by pedagogical concerns; there was also a political rationale for it. By the close of the Victorian era, British administrators were increasingly aware that the indiscriminate spread of English-medium education in the late nineteenth century had brought into being a class of disaffected would-be clerical workers (known as the Bengal Babus). This was not Macaulay's elite class of brown Englishmen: as Viceroy Mayo had observed in the 1870s, 'If you wait till the bad English, which the four hundred Babus learn in Calcutta, filters

down into the forty millions of Bengal, you will ultimately be a Silurian rock instead of a retired judge' (cited in Loh, 1975: 3). Alienated to some extent from their cultural roots by their smattering of Western knowledge and English, denied power and responsibility by the British, and, perhaps crucially, disillusioned by the increasing shortage of employment opportunities, the discontented products of the English schools were increasingly seen as a potential political threat to the Raj rather than as a class of cultural intermediaries.

The government's attempt to shift the focus of language policy from English-medium secondary education to elementary vernacular education was thus motivated by a mixture of pedagogical and political considerations. The unfortunate consequences of the spread of English in nineteenth-century India served as a warning to officials in other colonial contexts, not least in Malaya, where, as the next section reveals, the Indian example was ever present in the minds of policy-makers.

2.2 British language policies and practices in the Far East

2.2.1 The context of colonial language policy in Malaya

Colonial language policies in Malaya before the Second World War were not only shaped by the British experience in India, but also by the political, economic and social character of the three administrative spheres under British rule or influence during this period, namely the Straits Settlements (Penang, Malacca, Singapore), the Federated Malay States and the Unfederated Malay States. During the first half of the nineteenth century, Penang, Malacca and Singapore were essentially distant outposts of Britain's emerging Indian Empire, serving primarily as entrepôts and replenishing stations on the maritime trading route between India and China. From 1826 to 1851, the three possessions were loosely administered by the East India Company, after which they were brought under the control

of the India Office. In 1867, the Straits Settlements became a Crown Colony under the jurisdiction of the Colonial Office. In terms of their commercial and strategic rationale and their constitutional status, the Straits Settlements were thus identical to Hong Kong. Furthermore, like Hong Kong the Straits Settlements (particularly Singapore) were bustling seaports with fluid, occasionally volatile, and (at least initially) predominantly adult male populations. However, in contrast to Hong Kong, whose population was overwhelmingly Chinese, the communities which sprang up in the Settlements during the nineteenth century (and subsequently in the urban centres of the Malay peninsula) were more ethnically and linguistically diverse, for in addition to the indigenous Malays, there were sizeable Chinese and Indian immigrant communities (each speaking a variety of dialects), together with a small English-speaking European community. The polyglot character of Settlement society meant that English fulfilled an important social role in the colony, in addition to the political and economic roles which stemmed from its status as the official language (Hendershot, 1941). Although English possessed immense institutional importance in colonial Hong Kong, since the numerically dominant Chinese community mainly comprised Cantonese speakers it never functioned as a *lingua franca*.

The establishment of the Straits Settlements as a Crown Colony coincided with a period of instability in the Malay states of Perak, Selangor, Negri Sembilan and Pahang, which prompted the merchant community in the Settlements to request British intervention in order to protect its trading rights (Wong and Gwee, 1980). The result of British intervention was the progressive introduction after 1874 of a framework of control known as the residential system, which involved the maintenance of *de jure* Malay sultanates and a *de facto* British administration through specially appointed Residents (or ‘advisers’) (Wicks, 1987). In 1896, the four states combined to form the Federated Malay States. In the early

years of the twentieth century, the extension of British influence to other parts of the peninsula led to the appointment of British advisers in Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan, Trengganu and Johore, which subsequently became known as the Unfederated Malay States. In contrast to the Straits Settlements, the Malay States were predominantly rural in character, and contained a greater proportion of Malays, who lived in isolated villages along rivers and waterways, where they engaged in subsistence agriculture and fishing. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, the economic and ethnic structure of the Malay States were fundamentally altered by the influx of large numbers of Chinese and Indian immigrants. In fact, such was the scale of immigration that by the 1930s the economically dominant Chinese community actually outnumbered the indigenous population in the Malay States (Watson, 1982b). As we shall see below, the nature and purposes of British language policies in Malaya can only be fully understood against the background of the plural societies that emerged in the Straits Settlements and in the Malay States before the Japanese occupation (Wong and Gwee, 1972).

2.2.2 The Straits Settlements

The question of language policy received little attention in the Straits Settlements until 1870, when the recently instituted colonial government published the results of an inquiry by one Colonel Woolley into the state of education in the colony. In his survey of developments in the preceding half century, Woolley noted that progress had been ‘slow and uncertain’, a state of affairs which he attributed to the ‘indifference of the races’, particularly the Malays, and the ‘want of sufficient encouragement from the Government’ (reproduced in Wong and Gwee, 1980: 12). The lack of interest or direction from the British authorities in India meant

that educational initiatives were exclusively in the hands of public-spirited individuals or various missionary societies (Watson, 1982c).

During this period, two types of schools sprang up in the Straits Settlements: vernacular schools for the Malay, Chinese and Indian communities, and English schools, which were either Free schools or mission schools (Wong, 1966; Wong and Gwee, 1972). The Free schools, which were open to children of any race, creed or colour (hence the term ‘free’), provided an elementary Western education mainly in English, though vernacular languages were also taught (Chelliah, 1947). In the early nineteenth century, the most notable initiatives in the field of English-language education were the Penang Free School, which was founded in 1816 (Wicks, 1980), the London Missionary Society’s Anglo-Chinese College at Malacca (1818) (O’Sullivan, 1988), which moved to Hong Kong soon after its cession to Britain (see 3.3.5), and the Singapore Institution, which was established in 1823 by the Settlement’s founder, Stamford Raffles (Doraisamy, 1969). Raffles’ purpose in establishing the school, which sought to blend Western and Oriental learning, was to make Singapore ‘the focal point of a cultural renaissance involving a synthesis of a revitalized indigenous civilisation and Western economics, science and technology’ (Wicks, 1980: 173). Anticipating Macaulay’s theory of ‘downward filtration’, Raffles believed that the most realistic means of achieving this object was to educate ‘the sons of the higher order of natives’ rather than the masses since in ‘every country the lights of knowledge and improvement have commenced with the higher orders of society and have been diffused from thence downwards’ (cited in Hough, 1969: 157).

Despite the lofty ideals and aspirations which inspired their foundation, the evidence suggests that the colony’s English schools generally failed to achieve their founders’ ambitious religious or cultural objectives. Echoing the complaints of British officials in

India, the Woolley Report (1870) noted that the Settlements' schools had 'turned out many young men competent to earn a livelihood in Government and Mercantile Offices', but regretted that

the majority of these Clerks know only how to read, write, and speak English imperfectly, and their education has been such, that very few of them are in a position to make any material advancement in life, or to enjoy and improve by reading and adopting other means of self-culture. It is true that most of them are competent to work out a simple sum in Arithmetic, and to copy English in a legible hand, but as a general rule they have no ideality: ideas they have none; and they are incapable of expressing themselves in writing, either grammatically or logically. In your Committee's opinion this unfortunate state of things is mainly due to the short time that boys are kept at School by their parents, and to many of them, when at School, spending their leisure hours in thinking in and speaking some other language than English. (reproduced in Wong and Gwee, 1980: 12)

Given the 'backward state' of both English and vernacular education in the colony, a crucial question for the government was whether to improve the schools by beginning *de novo* or by thoroughly reorganising the existing schools. Sensitive to existing interests, Woolley opted for reorganisation rather than root and branch reform, and to this end recommended the appointment of an Inspector of Schools. Woolley's proposal was eventually accepted by the Colonial Office on condition that the appointee, A.M. Skinner, also be required to administer the colony's hospitals and asylums (Wicks, 1980), a decision that was perhaps emblematic of the apathy and parsimony at the heart of British education policy at this time. On the central issue of language policy, Woolley proposed a 'large extension of Vernacular Schools' on the grounds that 'a boy, whether he be Chinese or Malay, can make no real progress in Education until well grounded in his own language' (reproduced in Wong and Gwee, 1980: 14). Woolley's position on mother-tongue education closely accorded with the views of the new Inspector of Schools, who was a firm advocate of vernacular education for the Malays (Loh, 1975). Skinner's views on Malay-medium instruction, which also reflected official opinion in London (Wicks, 1980), ensured that

language policy in the Settlements in the late nineteenth century centred on the provision of elementary vernacular education for the colony's Malay community. Official support for mother-tongue teaching did not, however, extend to the provision of vernacular education for the Chinese and Indian communities (O'Brien, 1980), whom the British regarded as sojourners, and thus not deserving of substantial government aid (Loh, 1974a).

Although the promotion of elementary Malay education was the principal objective of British policy in the colony during this period, the government also provided some support for English-medium education. In accordance with practice in other colonies, the Settlements' English schools fell into two classes; the first consisting of schools managed by the government, the second being the grant-aided mission schools, which were especially popular with the Chinese community (Cooke, 1966). As in India, the attraction of the English schools lay principally in the preparation which they were perceived to provide for white-collar work in government or business. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the colony's elementary English schools were subjected to the same kinds of complaints as their counterparts on the subcontinent. As the following extract from the Kynnerseley Report (1902) reveals, one of the government's main concerns by the turn of the century was the disappointing level of language proficiency attained by graduates of the English stream:

Many complaints have been and are continually being made as to the quality of this education, chiefly with regard to the alleged inadequacy of the English (spoken and written) of the boys who leave school to become clerks in Government, mercantile or other offices. This may be regarded at present as the purpose for which at least nine-tenths of the boys, who stay sufficiently long at school to acquire any knowledge of English, are being trained. However advisable it may be that boys should be encouraged to take up other than clerical work, the demand for clerks is so large, and the popularity of this kind of employment so great among the boys and parents, that the training of efficient clerks must be regarded as perhaps the most important work to be performed by our English schools. (reproduced in Wong and Gwee, 1980: 39)

It is perhaps not entirely coincidental that major reviews of language policy were conducted in India (see 2.1.9), the Straits Settlements and Hong Kong (see 6.4) in the early years of the twentieth century. By the close of the Victorian era, the deleterious effects of the spread of English education in the preceding half century had become fully apparent, leading in each case to a fundamental reassessment of the roles of English and the vernacular languages in education. As we shall see below, the lessons of India were ever-present in the minds of officials when they came to frame language policy for the Malay States.

2.2.3 The Malay States

During the first two decades of British administration, schooling in the Malay States broadly followed the dual system of Malay and English education which operated in the Straits Settlements (Stevenson, 1975). It is important to note, however, that educational development was not an important consideration in the early years of British involvement on the peninsula. As in other colonial settings, the government's initial priorities centred on the maintenance of law and order and the establishment of a sound administrative base. Although the newly installed Residents paid little attention to education in the 1870s and 1880s, it was during this formative period that the administration evolved a policy towards the indigenous Malays that was to exert a profound influence on language policy in subsequent decades. This policy was founded on two guiding principles: minimum interference with the Malay peasantry and conciliation towards the Malay ruling class (Watson, 1982b). In typically British fashion, this dual policy appears not to have been preconceived, but rather emerged out of political and administrative expediency during the early years of Residential rule (Stevenson, 1975). In the sphere of education, this policy was

manifested in the provision of an elite form of English education for the aristocracy and basic vernacular education for the peasantry.

Education policy towards the rural Malays was defined in the early 1890s, and reflected the vision of the influential administrator, Frank Swettenham. Swettenham believed that the Malay peasantry should be provided with very rudimentary instruction in the vernacular (Loh, 1970); or, in the words of another official, the kind of education that would ‘make the son of a fisherman a better fisherman and the son of a farmer a better farmer’ (cited in Loh, 1974a: 238). Swettenham was firmly against the provision of English education (and even higher education in the vernacular) on the grounds that it could give rise to a class of malcontents who might disrupt or overthrow the existing social order (Stevenson, 1975). There seems little doubt that Swettenham’s policy was strongly influenced by the British experience in India, where, as we have seen, the spread of English education had created a class of disaffected would-be clerks. Swettenham’s desire to avoid what he termed the ‘pathetic results’ of the ‘education epidemic’ in India is reflected in his 1890 report on Perak:

The one danger to be guarded against is an attempt to teach English indiscriminately. It could not be well taught except in a very few schools, and I do not think it is at all advisable to attempt to give to the children of an agricultural population an indifferent knowledge of a language that to all but the very few would only unfit them for the duties of life and make them discontented with anything like manual labour. (cited in Loh, 1975: 15)

The political rationale which underlay the policy is made clear in Swettenham’s report for 1894: ‘I am not in favour of extending the number of “English” schools except where there is some palpable desire that English should be taught. Whilst we teach children to read and write and count in their own languages ... we are *safe*’ (cited in Loh, 1970: 110).

Swettenham’s policy towards the Malay villager was not, however, solely motivated by the fear of political unrest; as Stevenson (1975) has shown, it also represented the

attainment of a social ideal for the Victorian gentlemen who administered the Malay States during this period. Stevenson argues that Swettenham and his colleagues conceived the dichotomy between the aristocracy and peasantry in traditional Malay society very much in terms of the division between the gentry and tenantry in pre-industrial England. The class structure of eighteenth-century England was completed by the Chinese business community, whom Swettenham equated with the town-dwelling middle class. Swettenham's policy sought to preserve this tripartite class structure and social system by providing members of each class with an education appropriate to their 'station in life', which he believed to be preordained and inviolate. In the case of the rural Malays, Swettenham believed that the diffusion of English education posed a threat not only to the existing social order, but also to their traditional culture, which the paternalistic colonial squirarchy had come increasingly to admire. In devising a form of education suitable for the tillers of the soil, Swettenham appears to have been motivated by the desire to preserve the Malay villager in a Rousseauesque state of nature, where his time-honoured way of life would remain uncontaminated by the corrupting influences of modernity.

While the village school under the British aimed to keep the Malay peasantry on the land (and as far as possible in a cultural cocoon), education for the Malay elite sought to prepare them for leadership; or at least a measure of leadership. This was to be achieved by providing the sons of the chiefs and sultans with an education modelled on the English public school (Loh 1974b). As with their policy towards the Malay villager, the British were motivated by political and social considerations when framing their policy for the elite. From a political perspective, an important consequence of the extension of British control in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the use of English in the administrative domain. Since the British were eager to involve the traditional governing class in the

administration (though in subordinate positions), it was essential to provide boys of 'high birth' with instruction in the official language. From a social perspective, British officials hoped that the provision of a public-school-style education for the Malay elite, incorporating such 'character' enhancing elements as games, prefects and houses, would help develop in the future administrative class the gentlemanly qualities of leadership, duty and loyalty which they themselves possessed to a high degree (Stevenson, 1975). This policy to promote English boarding-school education, which has parallels in late nineteenth-century India (Mangan, 1978), found expression in the establishment of the Selangor Raja School and the Malay Residential School, the latter providing the foundations of the Malay College, the so-called 'Eton of Malaya', which in subsequent decades proved instrumental in fostering an indigenous civil service elite (Loh, 1975).

The third strand of British policy involved the provision (on a limited scale) of English-medium education for the immigrant communities in the main towns on the peninsula. In line with colonial practice in India and Africa, English education was mainly in the hands of missionary societies or private agencies (Cooke, 1966). The government's role in English education was therefore mainly indirect, being largely confined to the provision of grants for the various voluntary organisations engaged in this sphere, who were by no means all British (Wong, 1966). As in other colonies, direct government involvement centred on the establishment of 'premier' schools, such as the Victoria Institution in Selangor and the King Edward VII School in Perak, which acted as focal points for English-language education in each of the states (Loh, 1975). As befitted their role in the socio-economic structure of 'Merrie Malaya', the business-oriented Chinese were the principal attendees of the English schools during the colonial period.

Swettenham's attempt in the 1890s to 'adapt' education to what he perceived to be the needs of the Malay peasantry presaged a significant shift in colonial education policy in the 1920s and 1930s. The change in policy (if not practice) during this period was prompted by concern in missionary and government circles about the direction of education in Africa, and, as the next section reveals, this was to lead to a fundamental reassessment of the nature and purposes of language policy in the Empire.

2.3 British language policies and practices in Africa

2.3.1 Developments before the First World War

Before the First World War, the British government devoted little attention to the issue of language policy in African education (Scott, 1938; Lewis, 1959). In hindsight, this might be regarded as a surprising omission since it is now clear that language policy, especially in relation to the teaching and learning of English, was the source of many of the problems in colonial education in Africa during this period (Tiffen, 1968). In fact, it was not until the establishment in 1924 of the Advisory Committee on Native Education in British Tropical Africa that the metropolitan government began to take a systematic interest in colonial education (Whitehead, 1991). Prior to the Advisory Committee's foundation, the Colonial Office possessed no machinery for the consideration or co-ordination of education in the Empire (Mayhew, 1938; Lewis, 1954). The absence of clear central direction meant that education policy – of which language policy was a central element – was determined by individual colonial governments in the light of local circumstances, chief among which was the level of economic development (Whitehead, 1982).

Although the nature and extent of educational provision varied from colony to colony, during the course of the nineteenth century the same basic pattern emerged in most

British territories in Africa. In keeping with British practice in Asia, initiatives in the field of education rested largely with the missionary societies (Beck, 1966; Urch, 1971; Garvey, 1994). The respective roles and policies of the missions and colonial governments in Africa were described in a speech in 1956 by Sir Christopher Cox, the Chief Educational Adviser to the Colonial Office (1940-1970) (Whitehead, 1989a):

I must not suggest that a coherent educational policy was formulated in very early days by British officials overseas, let alone by the Colonial Office in Whitehall. Far from it. The Governments of the many scattered, diverse and as a rule wretchedly poor colonial territories had neither revenue nor personnel to initiate an active educational policy; instead, as happened in this country, the initiative was in general left to the churches, whose schools for a long period in most territories, particularly in the Caribbean and in Africa, met the modest needs of Government and commerce for literate employees. In the early days it was the missionaries and not Colonial Governments who in practice determined the way in which western schooling should be introduced to the colonial peoples; and the pattern and methods which they followed reproduced the familiar models they had known in Britain – though always, of course, scaled down to the pitifully little which was all they could afford. (Cox, 1956: 126)

Although Cox's point about the absence of a 'coherent educational policy' in Africa accords with the testimony of other colonial officials (Mayhew, 1938; Scott, 1938) and the findings of contemporary scholars (Watson, 1982a; Whitehead, 1995), what tends to be overlooked is that a formal statement of metropolitan policy towards the 'coloured races' was in existence as early as 1847. This was the report of the Education Committee of the Privy Council to the Colonial Office. The Report's significance lies not only in the fact that it was the British government's first foray into the field of colonial education policy, but also that its recommendations on the content and purposes of African education were remarkably similar to those advanced in the Advisory Committee's landmark 1925 White Paper, *Education Policy in British Tropical Africa*, which advocated the Swettenhamesque principle of adapting education to the needs of the native peoples (Whitehead, 1981). Unlike the White Paper, which (as we shall see) recommended the promotion of vernacular

education, the 1847 Report makes no explicit reference to the media by which this adapted curriculum should be imparted, although interestingly – and somewhat discordantly given its emphasis on basic agricultural skills – one of the policy’s principal objectives was to ‘diffuse a grammatical knowledge of the English language as the most important agent of civilization’ (cited in Foster, 1965: 55). The spread of the *English language* was thus a central aim of colonial policy from the beginnings of British involvement in African education. What also seems clear, however, is that British opinion and policy by no means favoured the wholesale introduction of academic *English education*. However, as Cox observed, this was precisely the form of education which expanded most rapidly in British Africa in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Pearce, 1988). As in India, the diffusion of grammar-school-style English education during this period sprang largely from the pressure of demand (Ball, 1983), which was mainly urban in origin and pragmatic in motivation (Foster, 1965). As we saw in 2.1.9, the Indian government’s attempt in the early twentieth century to address the pedagogical and political problems stemming from the spread of English came too late. However, in the case of Africa, since British expansion occurred during a later period, it was felt that similar problems could still be avoided if the metropolitan authorities took prompt action to reorient colonial education along vernacular lines.

2.3.2 The emergence of a definitive language policy

The vernacular-oriented policy that emerged in the 1920s was a central component of the Colonial Office's wider policy of adaptation in African education. The origins of the new policy can be traced to the growing concern in missionary circles about the direction of education in British Africa. It was perhaps not surprising that the impetus for change was provided by the missions since their schools educated the overwhelming majority of pupils in Africa (Oldham, 1925). Nor was it surprising that Africa should provide the spur for reform: by the 1920s, Britain's African colonies accounted for three-quarters of the Empire's population. Recognition of the problems of education in Africa – both real and potential – prompted the missions to call for the formation of a metropolitan body to develop and co-ordinate a common education policy (Whitehead, 1981). This resulted in the establishment in 1924 of the Colonial Office's Advisory Committee on Native Education in British Tropical Africa. In 1929, its remit was extended to the entire Empire, and was accordingly renamed the Advisory Committee on Education in the Colonies.

Although its formation instituted a new era in British colonial education, it is important to note that the Advisory Committee had no executive powers; its main function was to assemble, organise and disseminate information and advice. In keeping with the British practice of devolving decision making to the 'men on the spot', colonial administrators were at liberty to accept, reject or modify its advice in the light of local circumstances (Brown, 1964). From the perspective of the present study, one manifestation of the metropolitan authorities' growing interest in colonial education was the Burney report, which, as we saw in 1.2.6, advised the Hong Kong government to shift the focus of its language policy from English to vernacular education. In the literature on language in Hong Kong education the significance of the Burney report in relation to wider colonial policy is

ignored. In fact, Burney was a member of the Advisory Committee (Whitehead, 1991), and both his visit and the nature of his recommendations were symptomatic of the new interest in colonial education in the metropole during the inter-war years.

From the outset the Advisory Committee was determined to prevent a recurrence of what Lord Lugard (1925: 2) termed the ‘unhappy results’ of English education in India. Lugard, the foremost influence on colonial policy during the inter-war years, warned that the spread of academic English education in Africa had already produced a Babu-like class ‘imbued with theories of self-determination and half understood catch-words of the political hustings’ (ibid.: 2). For Lugard (and the Advisory Committee), the solution to the political and pedagogical problems associated with English education lay in the adaptation of education to ‘the mentality, aptitudes, occupations and the traditions of the various peoples’ (Oldham, 1925: 426). As noted above, adaptation and the engrafting of Western schooling on to indigenous stock were the keynotes of the 1925 White Paper (D’Souza, 1975; Bude, 1983).

A necessary corollary of adaptation was a vastly expanded role for the vernacular languages (and a concomitant contraction in that of English) in African education (Westermann, 1925; Sivonen, 1995). The vernacular-oriented policy was endorsed by the Imperial Education Conference in 1927, and was formally set out in the Advisory Committee’s report, *The Place of the Vernacular in Native Education* (1927). The Conference’s position on language policy is especially interesting in the light of H.H. Wilson’s contention that only those with the requisite interest and ability could study effectively in English:

The wide propagation of a smattering of English has its dangers, as experience shows; it tends to divorce the student from the past of his race; while providing no sure foothold for the future. It is better to make a thorough knowledge of English accessible to those who have the desire and

capacity for European studies, but for the rest to use and encourage an indigenous language, wherever possible the mother tongue. (Imperial Education Conference, 1927: 46)

The Advisory Committee's report echoed the Conference's recommendations on mother-tongue education, but at the same time identified a fundamental problem that had to be resolved in relation to the respective educational roles of English and the vernaculars: while on the one hand 'there is a common agreement that vernaculars must be used in the first stages of elementary education', on the other

there can be no doubt that one of the main incentives, if not *the* incentive, of African parents in sending their sons to school is for them to acquire a knowledge of English ... Any attempt, therefore, to delay unduly the introduction of English into African schools would be regarded as the attempt of Government to hold the African back from legitimate advance in civilization. (cited in Tiffen, 1968: 76)

Growing interest in the problems of language education in the Empire was also manifested in memoranda on the preparation and selection of English reading books for non-native students (1929) and the aims and methods of language teaching in the colonies (1930) (Whitehead, 1991). In this respect, it is perhaps also significant that among the delegates to the 1923 Imperial Education Conference, which focused on bilingual education, were two prominent figures in the fields of ELT and linguistics, Michael West and J.R. Firth (Tiffen, 1968). In fact, West's landmark report, *Bilingualism - with special reference to Bengal* (1926), grew out of the Conference's resolution that 'scientific investigation' be conducted into 'the facts of bilingualism with reference to the intellectual, emotional, and moral development of the child' (cited Howatt, 1984: 335).

The Advisory Committee's reports, the debates at the Imperial Education Conferences, and the work of West and others reflected a growing awareness during the 1920s and 1930s of the particular problems posed by the emergence of bilingual education systems in the Empire. Chief among these were such questions as: Who should have access

to English-medium education? What should be the roles of English and the vernaculars in the curriculum? When should English be introduced in the education system? Should the object of English-language education be the teaching of Western subjects in English or the teaching of English as a subject? When taught as a language, what should be the content, methods and medium of instruction? The emergence of these questions for study and debate during this period might be seen as a (belated) acknowledgement of the fact that teaching English as a subject and/or as a medium to impart Western knowledge to non-native students in the Empire was a somewhat different proposition from teaching English in the United Kingdom.

Although the inter-war years saw a number of initiatives by the metropolitan authorities to understand and address the problems of bilingual education in the Empire, it would appear that little real progress was made in the implementation of these policies before the outbreak of the Second World War (Whitehead, 1982, 1989b). The Advisory Committee's failure to translate policies into practice stemmed partly from its lack of directive powers. Another factor militating against educational change was the economic depression of the 1930s, which undermined the ability of the metropolitan and colonial governments to institute expensive reforms (Whitehead, 1991). In Africa, the Committee's major policy initiative during this period, the adaptation concept, ran aground on the rock of African resistance, a fact which, as Cox (1956) observed, underlined the instrumental role played by the 'colonised' in determining the nature of education policy:

Intentions and fulfilment are very different things, particularly when those responsible for policy and those for whose benefit it is designed have very different aims and values. A great deal that has turned out unexpectedly in African education flows from the conviction of capable, keen and self-confident professional men and women from this country that this or that part of their policy was best for the people of the country they were serving, and from the fact that the people themselves did not share the view. The African attitude in those days, with little outlet for expression, was often

undervalued, sometimes overlooked; yet, like that of colonial peoples elsewhere, it was always important, and was to become decisive. Our effort to apply to African educational policy lessons learnt from experience in India and the East probably came twenty or thirty years too late. For western schooling, however, thinly spread and rudimentary, had already taken root. African reactions to this new and arresting phenomenon had begun to take shape long before the wisdom of the Advisory Committee or Phelps-Stokes. That having once happened, the fundamental, though often underrated, factor in African education, as in colonial education generally, is less the policy of the government than the attitude of the governed. (Cox , 1956: 130)

What Cox chose not to mention is that the technical/agricultural curriculum was resisted (and resented) because, if implemented, it would have deprived the overwhelming majority of Africans the opportunity for social and occupational mobility in the colonial milieu (Foster, 1965). As Anderson (1970) pointed out, the position and activities of European officials, traders and settlers in Africa demonstrated that formal Western education led to greater power and prosperity. The African therefore demanded an academic English education identical to that in the United Kingdom, and guaranteed by the same examinations; anything else was deemed second rate and leading nowhere.

2.4 Language in British colonial education: A reassessment

In an important recent review of the British imperial experience, Brown (1999) argues that the Empire's 'most significant' legacy is the English-medium school and university. Brown claims that

Lord Macaulay was prescient in the 1830s when he spoke of the power of an English-medium education in India which would fashion a new elite, which would, in consequence, share with its rulers cultural values and political capabilities. Throughout the Empire it was such elites which first articulated new national identities and aspirations, and which began processes of cultural transformation and interaction in their homelands. The continuing influence of English education is evident at the end of the twentieth century in the role of English as an international language, and as a shared national language in countries where indigenous tongues are multiple and diverse, as in India, or where other languages are identified with distinctive ethnic or regional groups within one nation state ... The presence of English-language education has often encouraged and enriched new vernacular literatures, with some authors writing with ease in both English and a vernacular. It has also helped to establish new systems of vernacular education, significantly, often in opposition to the cultural and political dominance of the earlier English-speaking elites. (Brown, 1999: 706)

Brown's views on the apparently beneficent results of the diffusion of English-language education in Africa and Asia appear in the epilogue to a major scholarly reassessment of the British Empire, the *Oxford History of the British Empire* (1999). Given the significance which Brown attaches to the spread of English and English-medium education in the Empire, it is perhaps surprising that the editors of the five-volume study chose not to commission a chapter on language in British colonial education. While it is true that the study and use of English are occasionally mentioned in chapters about other (doubtless more important) aspects of British imperial rule, discussion of language issues is generally confined to one or two sentences (a paragraph in Brown's case), and is invariably based on expert opinion rather than on primary or even secondary sources (Brown refers to neither). We are therefore presented with something of a paradox: the Professor of Commonwealth History at Oxford claims that English-language education is the Empire's

most significant legacy, and yet (to date) there have been very few detailed empirical studies – at either the macro or micro levels – of British attitudes and policies towards the teaching and learning of English in the Empire, particularly in the period before the First World War. This chapter represents an initial attempt to map out what Howatt (1984) describes as a ‘vast subject’. Having surveyed developments in India, the Far East and Africa, we now need to stand back, draw together the various strands of the discussion, and (bearing in mind the questions Phillipson poses in *Linguistic Imperialism*) reassess the nature, purposes and consequences of colonial language policies and practices during the period under review.

The expansion of the British Empire undoubtedly had profound implications for the study and use of English worldwide. The current status of English as the pre-eminent global language can largely be attributed to the political, economic and cultural power of Britain and the United States in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Since English attained its world status in the second half of twentieth century (when the Empire was being dismantled), the influence of America is regarded as the paramount factor (Crystal, 1997). There can be little doubt, however, that the British presence in Asia and Africa before the Second World War contributed significantly to the spread of English, even though in many contexts its degree of penetration is likely to have been significantly lower than in the post-colonial era. The questions which therefore need to be asked (*pace* Phillipson) are how and why the British promoted the study and use of English in their Asian and African colonies during this period, and whether English was deliberately promoted at the expense of the vernacular languages.

Phillipson’s chapter on the ‘colonial linguistic inheritance’ begins with Robinson Crusoe teaching Man Friday English. Phillipson argues that the choice of English as the

shared language faithfully reflected the unequal power relationship between the Briton and the savage in the heyday of slavery. Phillipson's choice of starting point for his discussion is unfortunate since it creates the impression that linguistic imperialism began on a desert island sometime in the early eighteenth century and that it is inextricably linked to the promotion of English. While Phillipson is to be commended for highlighting the sometimes pernicious role of English in the imperial enterprise, and (particularly) for drawing attention to the iniquities which often spring from the global dominance of English, he chooses to overlook the fact that 'linguicism' has been an ever-present theme in international and intra-national history. To argue (as Phillipson seems to do) that this should not be so, that empires should never happen, that the language of the coloniser should never usurp that of the colonised appears excessively naïve. The fact is that the British, like all imperial powers in history, promoted their language for political, economic and cultural purposes. An inevitable (if unfortunate) consequence of the promotion of English (and all other imperial languages) was the marginalisation, neglect or suppression of the languages of the colonised. In a recent study, McArthur (1998) notes that English, French, Spanish and Portuguese have become significant forms of communication in 183 out of the then 232 internationally recognised territories. In almost all cases, their current status stems, directly or indirectly, from the colonial expansion of Britain, France, Spain and Portugal between the late fifteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries.

The linguistic history of the British Isles provides further evidence of the intimate relationship between colonialism and language spread, and also of the way in which language choice and use in society are dictated by dominant groups or classes. The successive invasions and occupations of the Romans, Anglo-Saxons and Normans between the first and fourteenth centuries resulted in the introduction of Latin, Old English and

French as the languages of government, the law and the governing class in (what is now called) England. The spread of English in Scotland, Wales and Ireland in the centuries which followed its emergence from the shadow of French, and the establishment of standard written and spoken forms of the language in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, reflected the political, economic and military dominance of England within the British Isles, and the power and prestige of the English ruling classes in London.

From a historical perspective, there was therefore nothing unusual about the British promoting their language during their imperial heyday. A far more interesting question to explore is how *actively* the British promoted the study and use of English. Phillipson provides some interesting evidence about how the British have promoted English during the post-colonial period; however, as discussed in 1.1.3, his account of how and (particularly) why they promoted English during the colonial era is seriously flawed, principally because of its lack of empirical underpinning. Although the methods and motivations of the British are perhaps best explored through detailed case studies of individual colonies (hence the present study), the evidence presented in this chapter, though mainly derived from secondary sources and published primary sources, does provide some interesting pointers.

The most obvious way in which the British promoted the *use* of English in their African and Asian colonies was through its introduction as the principal language of government and the law. Another (slightly less direct) way was through its use in the business, commercial and professional fields. The evidence presented in this chapter indicates that the use of English in the administrative, legal, business and professional domains provided a strong inducement for Britain's colonial subjects to learn the language. A recurring theme in the literature on British education in India, the Far East, Africa, and in other dependencies not explored in this chapter, such as Ceylon (Corea, 1969; Jayaweera,

1969) and Burma (Tipton, 1976, 1981), is that colonial students were primarily motivated to study English by the perception that a knowledge of the language (however rudimentary) opened up the possibility of employment (however menial) in government and business. In other words, proficiency in English was seen as an important determinant of socio-economic mobility in the colonial milieu.

In our account of language policy in India, we saw that British officials such as Holt Mackenzie and Charles Grant argued that the adoption of English as the official language would stimulate a strong demand for English-language education, and this indeed proved to be the case when Bentinck replaced Persian – itself a legacy of colonialism – with English in the 1830s. The question which needs to be asked, however, is whether the adoption of English as the official language throughout the Empire was primarily intended to stimulate its study and use in colonial society, or whether it was simply an inevitable manifestation of British sovereignty and rule. Although British officials may not have been averse to seeing English taught and learned, it would appear that this was a secondary motivation behind the introduction of English in official business. In this respect, the geographical distribution of English-medium schools provides interesting evidence of the forces which shaped the spread of English and English-language education, especially during the early years of colonial rule. Almost without exception, English schools were concentrated in the towns and cities rather than in the countryside. In India, for example, interest in English-language education was especially pronounced in the major administrative and commercial centres; outside the urban areas, there was little need and therefore demand for English. In Hong Kong, the premier Anglo-Chinese school, Queen's College, was situated in the bustling heart of Victoria; by contrast, the rural New Territories remained largely untouched by Western influence for much of the colonial period. Even in urban Hong Kong, where the

bulk of the colony's population lived and worked, English was studied and used by only a very small minority of Britain's Chinese subjects (Bacon-Shone and Bolton, 1998). In India, the source of British power and prestige, the number of people touched by English education was miniscule (Hartog, 1939). Thus, when considering the question of how actively the British promoted English in the Empire, it should be borne in mind that the extent of its reach and the depth of its penetration were extremely limited.

Demand for English-language education appears to have been closely connected with the *use* of English in government and business. The next question to consider is how determined and systematic the British were in promoting the *study* of English in order to satisfy this demand. This necessarily involves assessing the nature of colonial language policy. In some accounts of education in the Empire – even those without an ideological axe to grind – it is taken as axiomatic that the sole or primary objective of colonial policy was the promotion of English (which perhaps reflects continuing misunderstanding over the nature and influence of Macaulay's proposals). The evidence presented in this chapter certainly indicates that the teaching and learning of English constituted an integral element of British policy from the beginning of the imperial adventure. As we have seen, the desirability of promoting European knowledge in English was strongly advocated by Charles Grant as early as the 1790s. During the nineteenth century, the promotion of English-language education in India was an important objective of major policy documents such as Wood's Despatch and the Indian Education Commission report. The diffusion of English was also one of the aims of the (seemingly forgotten) 1847 report on education policy in Africa. It would be misleading, however, to describe British policy as wholly English-oriented, even during the first half of the nineteenth century when the British appear to have been most strongly motivated by the desire to disseminate their language and

culture. As we have seen, the promotion of elementary vernacular education (together with English or mixed-medium education at higher levels) was a stated aim of British policy in India for much of the Victorian era. After the First World War, the diffusion of vernacular education became the overriding objective of British policy, to such an extent that colonial officials tried (often unsuccessfully) to severely restrict access to English-language education. Although British language *practices* may have been more Anglicist in character than their language *policies*, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the British were much less vigorous in promoting their language than the French, whose policy of cultural assimilation in their Empire dictated the use of French throughout the education system (Clignet and Foster, 1964; Asiwaju, 1975). However, when assessing the nature of language policy in the Empire, and especially the notion of the British as unsystematic anglicisers (Bayly, 1999), we need to bear in mind Pennycook's (1998) point that English and vernacular education were two sides of the same colonial coin. There is an unfortunate tendency, which is hardly discouraged by the work of Phillipson and others, to regard the promotion of English in the colonial and post-colonial worlds as an unmitigated evil whereas an emphasis on vernacular education tends to be applauded. However, as will be discussed below, there is a good case for arguing that the motives which underlay the policy to promote rudimentary vernacular education in Malaya and Africa were far more reprehensible than the overtly 'linguicist' policies advocated by ardent anglicisers such as Grant and Macaulay.

Another issue to consider when assessing how actively the British promoted English is *where* decisions about policy were made. The evidence presented in this chapter indicates that language policies and practices in the Empire were primarily determined by forces *within* individual colonies rather than by dictats from the Colonial Office. In India, for

example, the introduction and spread of English-language education stemmed mainly from pressure from influential sections of the European and Indian communities. In Malaya, British policy was shaped by officials on the spot rather than by their superiors in the metropole. It would appear that responsibility for the formulation and implementation of policy continued to rest with the men on the spot even after the establishment of the Advisory Committee in the 1920s. One consequence of the decentralised character of British colonial education was considerable variation in language policies and practices across the Empire. Writing in the first volume of *Oversea Education*, Ormsby-Gore (1929: 2) claimed that nothing had struck him more about British policy than ‘the lack of touch between Colony and Colony’. Any assessment of how and why the British promoted English in the Empire must therefore take full account of the multifarious forces which influenced the development of language policy within individual colonies.

When considering the question of how actively the British promoted English-language education we need to be very clear about who we mean by ‘the British’: are we referring to British administrators in Whitehall, or British officials, educators, merchants, missionaries, etc. in individual colonies, or could it be that those who shaped ‘British’ language policies and practices were not British at all? Answers to these questions can be found by examining the national origins of the multiplicity of agencies that established and administered schools in the Empire. In most colonies, schools fell into three categories irrespective of level or medium of instruction: those directly under the control of the government, those managed by various missionary societies, and those run by private individuals or groups. In accordance with tradition in Britain, direct government involvement in education was generally very limited. In many colonies, especially during

the period before the First World War, government involvement in English-language education was restricted to a 'model' Anglo-vernacular school in the major town or city.

At the forefront of educational provision in the Empire were the missionary societies (which reflected the long-established British practice of placing responsibility for education in the hands of the church). Such was the influence of the missionary societies, especially in Africa, that any account of how and why the British promoted English in the Empire must consider the national origins and educational motivations of the missions, and the nature of their relationship with the colonial authorities. The first point to make is that the missionary societies were by no means all British (Porter, 1997). While it is true that many Protestant organisations active in Africa and Asia originated in Britain, there were others, such as the Basel Mission, the Berlin Mission and the American Baptist Mission, which had no connection with Britain at all. As might be expected, Catholic missionary societies engaged in educational work in the Empire were mainly French or Italian in origin.

Whatever their nationality or denomination, missionaries were united by a common goal: to proselytise through education. In many colonies, the most effective means of spreading the word was through the use of the vernacular languages, an approach that was especially appealing to the Protestant missions, whose emphasis on Bible reading placed a premium on literacy in the native language. It is perhaps not surprising therefore that Protestant societies initially concentrated on vernacular education (Holmes, 1967), although in some cases they later switched to English in response to native demand or competition from English-medium Catholic schools (Bassey, 1999). In nineteenth-century Hong Kong, most schools under the auspices of the Protestant missions were vernacular-medium, whereas the colony's Catholic schools taught mainly in English. The case of nineteenth-century Hong Kong also throws up another interesting paradox: two of the first three

government schools' inspectors were German by birth, and had worked for non-British missionary societies before assuming their positions.

A final point to consider when assessing the role of the missions in the promotion of English is the nature of their relationship with the colonial authorities. There is little doubt that the British government supported the educational work of the missions (irrespective of their nationality, denomination or language policy): the huge percentage of colonial students under their auspices – around 90% in Africa – is a testament to this. Government support for the missions was manifested most obviously through the grant-in-aid system, which in the latter part of the nineteenth century was modelled on England's much-reviled system of payment-by-results. The grant-in-aid system undoubtedly provided the British with a measure of control over the content and methods of education in the Empire. Whether the British instituted the system in order to promote English education is a question requiring empirical research. What is not in question, however, is that payment-by-results was the source of many of the pedagogical problems which afflicted colonial education during the Victorian era. One point that emerges from the literature is that the relationship between colonial governments and the missionary societies was highly complex, and its strength varied according to period and place, and perhaps most significantly, the predilections and religious leanings of the leading colonial officials (Neill, 1966).

It is worth noting that mission schools were at liberty to opt out of the grant-in-aid system, in which case they fell into the third – and somewhat amorphous – category of school: the private school. These were schools established mainly through the initiative of native Africans and Asians. Although the work of the private sector has tended to be neglected by researchers in the field of colonial education, there is some evidence to suggest that private schools played an important role in the diffusion of English in the Empire. In

India, the spread of English during the Victorian era appears to have been driven largely by native-run private schools (Nurullah and Naik, 1951). In Kenya, native Africans established private English schools in order to make available a prestigious form of education that their colonial masters were reluctant to provide (Ranger, 1965; Anderson, 1970). In Hong Kong, private schools were the driving force behind the expansion of the Anglo-Chinese stream in the 1960s and 1970s (Crawford, 1995). The point here is that the initiative for establishing a significant percentage of English schools in the Empire came from native Africans and Asians or from missionary societies with ties to other Western powers, some of which, like France, Germany and the United States, were rivals of the British. While it is true that the fact of British rule underlay the establishment of private English schools, in that individuals or groups were responding to the demand for English created by the colonial milieu, it is important to note that these schools were founded and maintained without the support – and in some cases the blessing – of the colonial authorities. It should be emphasised that highlighting the crucial role of foreign and non-governmental agencies in the promotion of English is not intended to absolve the British of responsibility for their in many ways disastrous language policies and practices; rather, it is intended to underline the complexity of language issues in colonial education, a complexity which tends to be ignored or downplayed in some of the more deterministic accounts of British policy and practice.

Thus far we have been assessing how actively ‘the British’ promoted the study and use of English in the Empire. To this end, we have examined some of the factors which influenced the spread of English and English-language education, the nature of British language policy, and where and by whom decisions about language policy were made. We now need to turn to perhaps the most interesting (and controversial) question in the study of language in colonial education: what were the *purposes* of British policy, particularly in

relation to the teaching and learning of English? Although critics like Phillipson ascribe clear motives to the formulation of colonial policy, namely the desire to exercise linguistic hegemony over the peoples of Africa and Asia, the evidence presented in this chapter indicates that while this may be part of the truth, it is by no means the whole truth. The preceding discussion in particular highlights the dangers (from a scholarly perspective) of adhering to a monocausal interpretation of British policy. Even if we leave to one side the enormous diversity of the Empire in terms of peoples and places, the multiplicity of agencies engaged in colonial education makes it difficult to talk with any confidence about the ‘purpose’ of British policy. A range of motives – some worthy, others less so – inspired those charged with the development and implementation of language policy in the Empire. These included the promotion of British political interests, the imposition of Western beliefs and values, the creation of a subservient workforce, the conciliation of influential sections of indigenous society, the conversion of native subjects to Christianity, the dissemination of knowledge and enlightenment, the desire to make money.

Identifying the purposes of language policies and practices in the government sector is of particular importance as these are perhaps the most reliable indicators of British intentions in the Empire. The evidence presented in this chapter (unsurprisingly) suggests that colonial language policies were often expressly designed to nurture and sustain British rule. What is interesting, however, is that those policies with the most explicit political purpose involved the promotion of vernacular education rather than English education. Perhaps the most notable example was Swettenham’s policy towards the Malay peasantry, which involved the provision of rudimentary vernacular education and the severe (if not total) restriction of English teaching. The ‘adaptation’ concept in African education was also motivated by political and economic considerations (Mwiria, 1991; Banya, 1993),

particularly in the settler colonies (Mashingaidze, 1976; Mungazi, 1989), although pedagogical concerns – especially the desire to curb the excesses of the grammar-school curriculum – were also an important factor; *the* most important factor if British officials are to be believed (Cox, 1956). Phillipson therefore has some justification in arguing that colonial language policy was intended to reinforce and perpetuate British hegemony, and yet the evidence suggests that the British sought to accomplish their imperial objectives in Africa and Asia by doing precisely what Phillipson and others would presumably applaud, namely promoting indigenous languages and cultures in education, and withholding as much as possible the teaching of English. Although Phillipson castigates Macaulay for riding roughshod over indigenous traditions of learning and for imposing English as the ‘master language of the empire’, there is a good case for arguing that the policies associated with Swettenham and Lugard were far more sinister in intent than those propounded (however arrogantly) by Grant and Macaulay. Whereas the former were designed – at least in part – to keep Britain’s native subjects ignorant, weak and submissive, the latter, by providing access to the knowledge, ideas and techniques of the West, offered the means by which the indigenous peoples of Africa and Asia could throw off the British yoke. While Swettenham and Lugard were apparently intent on protecting and promoting the Pax Britannica, Macaulay and Trevelyan were both acutely aware that the ultimate consequence of the introduction and spread of English-language education was likely to be independence.

In an article in the mid-1960s, Malcolm Muggeridge claimed that ‘Education was about the worst thing we did to India and, appropriately enough, contributed to our departure. Was it not predominantly enraged and unemployed graduates who chased us out, hurling after us curses and copies of the *Oxford Book of English Verse*?’ (cited in Clive, 1973: 417). Independence may have been the most significant long-term consequence of the

spread of English education in India and elsewhere, but in the short term the treasures of English literature lay at the heart of many of the problems which beset education in the Empire. While the diffusion of English education may have brought enlightenment and inspiration to some colonial students, in perhaps the majority of cases the academic curriculum and examinations were sources of bewilderment, boredom or frustration. One of the dominant themes of reports on education in India, the Far East and Africa is the sense of disappointment felt by officials and educators with the results of language policies and practices, particularly in relation to the teaching and learning of English. As the next four chapters reveal, many of the language-based problems discussed in this chapter were also apparent in Hong Kong in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and particularly (as we shall now see) during the first two decades of British rule, which saw the introduction of English-language education in the colony.

Chapter Three

The introduction of English-language education in Hong Kong (1842-1859)

This chapter examines the introduction of English-language education in Hong Kong during the first two decades of British rule. The first section analyses the political, economic and demographic forces which shaped language policies and practices during this formative period in the colony's history. The second section provides an overview of developments in Chinese and Western education during the 1840s and 1850s. The third section examines language policies and practices in the colony's mission schools. This section focuses on the work of the Morrison Education Society School, which was the first Anglo-Chinese school to be established in Hong Kong after the British occupation. The final section analyses policies and practices in the government vernacular schools.

3.1 The context of colonial language policy: Part 1 (1842-1859)

3.1.1 British policy in Hong Kong

For the greater part of the period covered by the present study, the Crown Colony of Hong Kong comprised the Island of Hong Kong, which was annexed in 1842 after the first Opium War, and the Kowloon peninsula, which was ceded to the British in 1860 after the second Opium War. The much larger New Territories were acquired in 1898 under a ninety-nine-year lease, the expiry of which at midnight on 30 June 1997 marked the end of British sovereignty over Hong Kong. The circumstances surrounding the cession of Hong Kong Island lend support to Fieldhouse's (1982) argument that the momentum for most colonial acquisitions in the early Victorian period came from the periphery rather than from the

metropole, and typically involved the British government supporting the interests of overseas traders by securing commercial treaties providing most favourable conditions. Fieldhouse also argues that the reasons why a particular dependency was acquired during this period normally determined its character and functions as a colony. This point has implications for the present study since it underlines the importance of viewing language policies and practices from the broader perspective of British policy in Hong Kong.

British policy in Hong Kong and China was indissolubly linked to trade, and the primary objective of successive administrations during the nineteenth century was to protect and promote British commercial interests in the region (Tsang, 1997). Britain appeared to have no territorial designs on China since the British government did not wish to incur the heavy administrative expenses that would inevitably arise from the exercise of direct political control, and in this respect the spectre of India with its multifarious responsibilities was ever before the eyes of policy-makers in Whitehall (Dean, 1976). The establishment of Hong Kong as a British colony was therefore not the result of territorial acquisitiveness, but rather sprang from the need for a trading post on the China coast, where the security offered by British administrative and legal institutions, and military and naval power, would provide the stability in which British trade could flourish. Hong Kong's role as a military, diplomatic and trading station, together with *laissez-faire* ideas on government which prevailed in Victorian Britain, determined the nature and scope of the colonial government's activities, which for much of the nineteenth century were limited to the maintenance of public order, and meeting the cost of the civil establishment and necessary public works (Endacott, 1964).

Although the desirability of acquiring an 'insular possession' to promote British trade in China had been acknowledged since the late eighteenth century, it is interesting that

the initial occupation of Hong Kong was decidedly against British policy (Welsh, 1993). In April 1841, Palmerston condemned the British plenipotentiary, Charles Elliot, for disobeying his instructions by obtaining Hong Kong, and a month later informed Elliot's successor, Henry Pottinger, 'that Hong Kong could not for a great length of Time afford to our Merchants any new Facilities for Trade' (cited in Graham, 1978: 171). Although the British government finally accepted the colonial status of Hong Kong, it was largely the result of a decision made by Pottinger, who was convinced that the Island would become 'a vast emporium of commerce and wealth' (cited in Endacott, 1973: 72). In fact, despite Whitehall's eventual recognition of Hong Kong as a permanent British settlement, the long-term prospects of the fledgling colony were in doubt until well into the 1850s, and this was mainly because the economy, its *raison d'être*, was not as successful as had originally been expected.

3.1.2 Economic development in early colonial Hong Kong

After the cession of Hong Kong, merchants and officials confidently expected that the colony would become the centre of British trade in China. However, optimism over the colony's economic prospects rapidly evaporated. The Treasurer in Governor Davis's administration (1844-1848), Robert Martin (1844: 11), described Hong Kong as 'a barren rock producing nothing', and argued that there was not the slightest probability of its becoming a place of trade. Martin also believed that it was 'the height of improbability to suppose that the possession of Hong Kong will ever enable us to disseminate our religion, language, and institutions' in China (ibid.: 15). The colonial government's economic problems during this period were compounded by the reduction of metropolitan support following the recommendations of the Parliamentary Select Committee in 1847. Up to this

time, the British government had financed most of the very limited development which had taken place in Hong Kong. However, most MPs opposed the use of public money to support colonial administration, while the free traders were also against territorial expansion on the grounds that colonies were useless burdens on the home government (Endacott, 1973). As a result of the anti-colonial climate in Britain, the Parliamentary vote for Hong Kong was reduced from £49,000 in 1845 to £15,500 in 1851, in consequence of which the colonial government was required drastically to reduce its expenditure. The parlous state of the government's finances meant that it was in no position to devote large sums of money to educational development. The priorities of the government, and, in particular, the importance which it attached to education, can be gauged by the fact that between 1842 and 1859 the percentage of expenditure devoted to schooling ranged from 1% to 3%, whereas spending on public order accounted for 30%-40% of total revenue (Hong Kong Government, 1932).

3.1.3 Hong Kong society in the 1840s and 1850s

Before the British occupation, the population of Hong Kong Island was estimated to be about 4,000, the majority of whom were engaged in agriculture and fishing (Smith, 1970). The arrival of the British, and the ensuing development along the Island's northern shore, led to a rapid influx of Chinese from the neighbouring region. According to a government report issued in June 1845, the population of the Island was estimated to be 23,817, of whom 595 were Europeans and 362 were Indians (Endacott, 1973). These figures do not, however, reveal the turnover of population during the early years of British rule. Most of the Chinese who came to Hong Kong were attracted by the economic opportunities offered by the new settlement. They had no intention of settling in Hong Kong; they merely wished

to make some quick money, and then return to their native villages (Tsai, 1993). Apart from its transience, the other characteristic of the Chinese community in early colonial Hong Kong was that it was predominantly adult and male. The 1845 population report revealed that there were only 1,700 children in the colony, the majority of whom lived on boats (and were therefore presumably the offspring of the Island's indigenous inhabitants) (Endacott, 1973). This suggests that there were few families among the new arrivals.

Hong Kong's early Chinese inhabitants were regarded in a highly unfavourable light by the European community (Anon, 1845; Weatherhead, ?1859). Martin (1844: 8), who was by no means an objective observer, claimed that after three and a half years of British rule there were no respectable Chinese inhabitants on the Island: 'There is in fact, a continual shifting of a Bedouin sort of population, whose migratory, predatory, gambling and dissolute habits, utterly unfit them for continuous industry, and render them not only useless but highly injurious subjects in the attempt to form a new colony.' In an attempt to control the high levels of crime, the authorities introduced a series of discriminatory laws against the Chinese community, the most notorious being the imposition of a strict night curfew which prohibited the Chinese from venturing out after nine o'clock without a lantern and a note from their employers (Wesley Smith, 1994; Munn, 2001). The severity of the punishments meted out to law-breakers, and the arrogance of the European ruling class, prompted the missionary George Smith (1847: 512) to observe that the Chinese were 'treated as a degraded race of people'. According to Governor Bowring (1854-1859), 'the separation of the native population from the European is nearly absolute; social intercourse between the races wholly unknown' (cited in Endacott, 1973: 122).

A number of factors therefore militated against major policy initiatives in Hong Kong education during the first two decades of British rule. These factors included the

uncertainty which existed over the colony's long-term political future, the unexpectedly slow progress of the economy, the hostility and instability in the Pearl River Delta after the first Opium War and in the lead-up to the second, the social tensions which inevitably arose from the proximity of the European and Chinese communities in a rough frontier town, and, as Eitel (1890-91) noted, the fact that education – still less the acquisition of English – was hardly uppermost in the minds of the Chinese who flocked to Hong Kong during this period.

While schooling for the colony's growing Chinese community was hardly a pressing concern, as the next section reveals, this period witnessed a number of interesting initiatives in the fields of Chinese and Western education.

3.2 Educational development in early colonial Hong Kong

3.2.1 Chinese education in pre-colonial Hong Kong

Since the Island's indigenous inhabitants were mainly farmers and fishermen, it is likely that educational provision in pre-colonial Hong Kong was somewhat rudimentary. According to Eitel (1890-91: 308), 'for at least a century before the British occupation of Hong Kong, there were already small Chinese Schools in existence in the villages of Wongneichung, Stanley, Little Hong Kong and Aberdeen'. While education in the Island's village schools apparently centred on the acquisition of basic literacy in Chinese, it is important to note that educational provision was more varied and sophisticated in the area that became known as the New Territories. Sweeting (1990) points out that a college existed at Kam Tin four hundred years before the founding of Eton, while the nineteenth century saw the establishment of the Lung-chin Free School and a number of study halls. Unlike pupils on Hong Kong Island, there is evidence that some students on the mainland were

prepared for the imperial civil service examinations, and would therefore have received a thorough grounding in the Confucian canon (Ng Lun, 1984b).

The presence of Chinese schools of various types in Hong Kong – on the Island before 1842, in Kowloon before 1860, and in the New Territories before 1898 – is highly significant in terms of the evolution of the colony's education system between 1842 and 1913. Like their counterparts in India, policy-makers in Hong Kong were confronted with politically and pedagogically awkward decisions about whether (and if so, how far) to interfere with the content, medium and methods of instruction in the native schools. This involved grappling with such issues as whether the focus of instruction should be Confucian or Western learning, whether the medium for imparting this learning should be Chinese or English, and whether (and if so, when) English should be introduced as a subject. In essence, these questions involved decisions about the roles of the two languages in education.

When assessing language policies and practices in nineteenth-century Hong Kong we need to take account of the fact that education was influenced by two quite different systems, one originating in Victorian Britain, the other in Ch'ing China. This dual system of education was to remain a feature of education in the colony until well into the post-World War II period; in fact, it is only in the past three decades that the local education system might be regarded as being truly autochthonous (Luk, 1991). Given the long tradition of Chinese education in pre-colonial Hong Kong, particularly in the New Territories, it would be dangerous to regard the colony as a *tabula rasa* on which the British could easily inscribe their linguistic will.

3.2.2 Trends in Chinese and Western education

Before we examine language policies and practices in the mission schools and the government schools it would be instructive to analyse enrolments in the various types of schools in early colonial Hong Kong (Table 2). Statistical information is especially valuable in the 1842-1859 period because government records contain few explicit statements of aims in the area of language policy.

Table 2 Trends in Chinese and Western education in Hong Kong (1844-1859).

Year	Chinese	Anglo-Chinese	English	Portuguese	European	Catholic Seminaries
1844	106	100	0	0	0	0
1845	149	53	47	0	0	0
1846	181	48	33	0	0	21
1847	175	50	48	0	0	20
1848	231	56	45	18	13	0
1849	139	42	15	20	19	0
1850	88	84	7	34	0	14
1851	131	90	7	62	0	14
1852	142	89	7	66	0	29
1853	150	66	8	21	0	31
1854	129	66	0	21	0	31
1855	300	129	45	28	0	40
1856	476	122	61	0	62	37
1857	521	57	97	0	0	40
1858	592	40	137	0	0	30
1859	937	40	83	17	0	0

Collated from the *HKBB* (1844-1859).

The enrolment figures in Table 2 are derived from the government's annual returns on education in the *Hong Kong Blue Books* between 1844 and 1859. These returns provide a simple record of the number of schools and students in the colony in a particular year, together with notes on each school's 'mode of instruction', affiliation and expenses. A

degree of caution needs to be exercised when interpreting the figures in Table 2. Since education was hardly an overriding preoccupation during this period, it would be reasonable to assume that the collection of statistical data would not have been especially thorough or systematic (and in this respect it is worth noting that it was not until 1857 that the colony had a full-time schools' inspector). Given the social instability and administrative laxity which characterised early colonial Hong Kong, it is highly likely that a number of schools were omitted from the annual returns, particularly private Chinese schools and small tutorial establishments run by Europeans. It should also be remembered that enrolments in the native schools often fluctuated considerably during the year so that even if data relating to a particular school were included in the returns, it is difficult to judge whether this information, which was perhaps based on a single inspection, would accurately reflect enrolments over the whole year.

Despite the somewhat questionable accuracy of the figures, they do provide a picture – in broad brush strokes – of trends in Chinese and Western education during the first two decades of British rule. It will be immediately apparent that the vast majority of children who went to school in Hong Kong during this period – and it should be emphasised that most children in the colony did not do so – attended Chinese schools. The ascendancy of the Chinese stream was especially pronounced in the late 1850s, when there was a significant influx of refugees from China in consequence of the Taiping Rebellion. This would not be the last time in Hong Kong's history when the course of education was shaped by demographic forces set in motion by turbulence on the mainland (see 1.2.3). It will also be noted that only a small number of Chinese pupils opted to receive a bilingual education in one of the handful of Anglo-Chinese mission schools in operation during this period.

Although this study focuses on language policies and practices in the colony's Chinese and Anglo-Chinese schools (i.e. schools for the Chinese community), it is important to note that these were not the only types of school in existence in nineteenth-century Hong Kong. It can be seen from Table 2 that four other categories of school were established on the Island between 1844 and 1859. Schools classified as English are ones that were primarily intended for English-speaking students. The most significant initiative in this area was St Andrew's School, which was established in 1855 after a public meeting at which a number of prominent residents expressed dissatisfaction with the limited educational opportunities available for European children. One of the prime movers behind the school's foundation, Andrew Shortrede, complained that 'it was not very creditable to Hong Kong that, though it had existed for twelve years as a British Colony, it was without a Public School for instruction in English, so that the children of our countrymen were less cared for, growing up in greater ignorance, than the Chinese' (*CM*, 8 March 1855: 38). Despite the apparently Anglo-centric tone of the debate, the outcome of the meeting was a surprisingly liberal resolution, which recommended that a school be established 'for the Education of Children, of whatever Nation, Religion, Class, or Condition' (*ibid.*: 38). This objective appears to have been realised from the outset since the 1855 education report states that St Andrew's students were 'without distinction of countries, including Chinese' (*HKBB*, 1855: 259). It is interesting that the report on St Andrew's in 1859 states that 'The principal attendants at this school are Portuguese and Chinese besides some Parsees and children belonging to other countries' (*HKBB*, 1859: 193). This indicates that the demand for English education among British residents was somewhat less pronounced than Shortrede had anticipated.

The other categories of Western school owed their foundations to the initiative of the Catholic Missions. From the late 1840s onwards, several small schools were established for the colony's (formerly Macau-based) Portuguese community. Although the *Blue Books* describe the mode of instruction in these schools as Portuguese, they appear to have placed considerable emphasis on English, which at this time was highly prized by young Portuguese for its commercial value (Braga, 1971). The final category of school established were the Catholic seminaries, which provided an ecclesiastical education in Chinese and Latin for Chinese pupils preparing for the priesthood. Government records indicate that enrolments at the two seminaries remained quite steady during this period, which contrasts quite sharply with the fluctuating numbers and rapid turnover of students experienced by the Anglo-Chinese schools.

Having provided an overview of developments in Hong Kong education between 1842 and 1859, we now need to examine language policies and practices in the two most important streams of schooling for the Island's Chinese community: the Anglo-Chinese mission schools (3.3) and the government vernacular schools (3.4).

3.3 Language policies and practices in the mission schools

3.3.1 The Morrison Education Society School

The arrival of Robert Morrison in Macau in 1807 is perhaps the most appropriate starting point for the history of language in education in colonial Hong Kong. Morrison had been sent to China by the London Missionary Society (LMS) with the aim of learning Chinese and translating the Bible into Chinese, tasks which were essential to the society's ultimate goal of spreading the Gospel in China (Ride, 1957). Morrison's early years in China were fraught with difficulties and frustrations. Apart from the obvious problems which stemmed from the Chinese government's prohibition against foreigners learning Chinese and attempting to spread Christianity (Hunter, 1911), Morrison's presence on the China coast was viewed with suspicion by the Catholic authorities in Macau and the representatives of the East India Company in Canton, whose regulations forbade any British person apart from their own employees and merchants to live in the factory area during the trading season. In 1809, Morrison's fortunes began to improve when he accepted the post of Chinese Secretary and Translator to the British Factory at Canton (Morrison, 1839). Morrison's position with the Company legitimised his presence in China, and thus provided the necessary stability to proceed with his Chinese studies and the momentous task of translating the Bible into Chinese, which he completed in 1819.

Of perhaps more immediate relevance to the present study was the instrumental role which Morrison played in the establishment at Malacca in 1818 of the LMS's Anglo-Chinese College, whose mission – in its original guise – was to encourage the 'reciprocal cultivation of Chinese and European Literature' (London Missionary Society, 1825: 8). The Ch'ing government's proscription of Christianity, and its restrictive regulations governing the residence of foreigners prevented the missionary societies from carrying out evangelical

work in China. The choice of Malacca as the location of the college stemmed from its central position in south-east Asia and its proximity to Chinese settlements in the Straits. It was also close enough to the Middle Kingdom for the institution to move to China once conditions became more favourable for missionary work, as was the case after the signing of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, when the college under the headmastership of James Legge was finally able to move to Hong Kong (Harrison, 1979).

Morrison's death in 1834 prompted the leading figures in the foreign communities in Canton and Macau to found a society in his memory, whose object would be 'to establish and support schools in China, in which native youth shall be taught, in connection with their own, to read and write the English language; and through this medium, to bring within their reach all the varied learning of the Western world' (*CR*, September 1836: 374). The prime movers behind the establishment of the Morrison Education Society (MES) and the main formulators of its educational aims were the British business community in Canton, notably the prominent opium traders Lancelot Dent and William Jardine, and the small group of Protestant missionaries who had arrived on the China coast in the early 1830s, chief among whom was the American Elijah Bridgman.

At first sight, it might appear that unscrupulous opium dealers like Jardine and Evangelical Christians like Bridgman would make unlikely bedfellows. On closer inspection, however, it is apparent that the foreign traders and missionaries shared a generally contemptuous view of Chinese culture, and a common interest in seeing change and progress in China (Dawson, 1967). The free traders wished to see an end to the restrictive trading practices in Canton and the opening of the China market to the West, while the missionaries wanted the freedom to proselytise. The opening of China to Western business and religion required a change in the attitude of the Chinese people, particularly

the Confucian elite, who had traditionally been dismissive of Western knowledge and ideas. For the foreign business and religious communities, the key to the transformation of China – as it had been for Grant and Macaulay in India – was the diffusion of Western education and the English language. In this respect, it is interesting that several years before the establishment of the MES, and almost a decade before the annexation of Hong Kong, Bridgman predicted that the study and use of English would rapidly increase in China during the nineteenth century:

The prospect that the English language will be far more extensively used, was never fairer than at this hour. Look at British India. For a long time its progress there was very slow, and its effects almost imperceptible; now its march is beginning to be rapid, and its influence is of the most interesting character. The first endeavours to communicate a knowledge of a foreign tongue to the natives of India, must necessarily have been attended with many hindrances and opposed by many obstacles; but a marked change has taken place, and instruction is given with almost as many advantages as in the most favoured countries of Europe. The work gathers new interest as it proceeds; if it is well conducted, its results, we believe, will far exceed the most sanguine expectations of its conductors and supporters. By acquiring a knowledge of the English tongue, the native youth will be introduced into a new world. He will live and move in a new atmosphere. He will be acted upon by new influences. He will see and feel a thousand new relations. (*CR*, May 1833: 1-2)

The first headmaster of the MES School, the Rev. Samuel Brown, a Yale graduate, arrived in Macau in February 1839. Nine months later the MES school finally opened its doors. The school day at the new institution – like Stewart's Central School – was divided into two equal sessions, one devoted to English, the other to Chinese (*CR*, October 1841: 571). Since the school's early years coincided with the first Opium War, little progress was made. However, the occupation of Hong Kong prompted the MES to consider moving the school across the Pearl estuary, and to this end it wrote to Governor Pottinger in February 1842 to request a plot of land for the erection of its school building. Pottinger acceded to the MES's request, and in a meeting with a deputation from the society in April 1842 agreed to

be its Patron. Having secured the support of the colonial authorities, the school moved into temporary quarters on the Island in November 1842, and in the following April began its operations in a schoolhouse overlooking the harbour (*CR*, October 1842: 544).

The MES's petition was the first in a series of exchanges between the missionary societies and the British authorities over the question of educational provision, and, as we shall see, the nature of these requests, and the responses of the colonial and metropolitan governments, provide interesting evidence of the different (and at times conflicting) positions of the missions and the authorities on the promotion of English in the colony.

3.3.2 Government policy towards the mission schools

The success of the MES's application appears to have encouraged the LMS to write to Pottinger (18 August 1843) to request a site for the Anglo-Chinese College, which was preparing to transfer its operations from Malacca to Hong Kong. The LMS sought to justify its request by expressing the belief that the college would be 'the means of widely diffusing the principles of sound knowledge and true religion' in consequence of which 'multitudes of the Chinese' would look 'with feelings of gratitude to this free and British settlement' (CO 129/2: 261-2). In his reply three days later, Pottinger informed the LMS that he was unable to accede to its request since further grants of land required the sanction of the metropolitan authorities. Pottinger also noted, however, that his patronage of the MES School had been founded on his 'impression' that it would supersede the Anglo-Chinese College, and with this mind he announced – no doubt to the LMS's dismay – his intention to transfer the annual subsidy (\$1,200) which the British government had paid to the Anglo-Chinese College at Malacca to the MES School. It appears, however, that the underlying reason for Pottinger's withdrawal of support was his annoyance at the college's failure to

provide the British with linguistic assistance during the Opium War. Pottinger's dissatisfaction with the college is manifested at the end of his letter, where he complained that 'although the Governor of the Straits Settlements offered every inducement in the shape of pay, not one person of any class or kind could be found either at Malacca or elsewhere in the Straits who would come on to assist in the important department of interpreters during the late war with China' (ibid.: 265).

The next day (21 August 1843), Pottinger wrote to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Stanley, to elaborate on his reasons for snubbing the LMS. In his despatch, Pottinger argued that the LMS's educational plans were 'altogether premature and uncalled for, to say nothing of the self evident political objections which exist to some parts of them' (ibid.: 251). Given the character of Hong Kong society, Pottinger doubted whether there would ever be sufficient demand to justify the existence of two institutions for the teaching of English:

It seems to me that it will be quite time enough to talk of founding an Anglo-Chinese College, when the success of the Morrison Education Society shall have proved that it is likely to be useful, and even then it should ... be amalgamated with that Institution, as two Institutions of the sort in one small place like Hongkong – where I conceive it to be extremely doubtful whether any respectable Chinese will ever voluntarily avail themselves of the intended boon – will be totally superfluous. (ibid.: 251-2)

Though not opposed to 'the diffusion of European knowledge and education' in China, Pottinger expressed his concern that 'these early and ill digested measures' might 'involve the Governments in disagreeable, if not angry discussions', and doubted whether 'it would be either right or politic to extend the protection of our Consuls to any persons who may openly establish schools, or similar institutions, in any part of China, in opposition to the wishes of the Imperial Government' (ibid.: 252).

Pottinger formally notified Whitehall of his decision to transfer the grant to the MES School in a despatch to Stanley on 20 December 1843. He attempted to justify the move, which ultimately required the Secretary of State's assent, by describing the valuable services which two MES students had already given as interpreters for the British Consul in Shanghai, Captain Balfour, who had applied to the society for students soon after Pottinger's decision was announced. Balfour's request clearly placed the MES in an embarrassing position, for, as its President, Elijah Bridgman, noted in his reply (21 October 1843), the society was reluctant to allow its students' education to be disrupted, and yet, as the recipients of government funding, it was clearly obliged to provide any assistance the British might require. Although Bridgman emphasised that his students' attainments were 'not such that we should have thought of offering them for public service at the present time' (ibid.: 440), given Pottinger's patronage of the MES and 'the intentions he has expressed of further support', he was 'especially desirous to meet this first application made by an officer of Her Majesty's Government' (ibid.: 441).

Pottinger's despatch arrived at the Colonial Office on 8 March 1844 (i.e. three months later), and was then forwarded to the Foreign Office (under whose auspices the funds were placed) for the authorisation of the Secretary of State, Lord Aberdeen. Aberdeen's ruling (25 March 1844) on the funding question was directed to Pottinger's successor in Hong Kong, Sir John Davis. As Pottinger had made his recommendation 'in anticipation of the approval' of the metropolitan government, and had therefore 'actually paid to the latter Society [the MES] the amount of one year's allowance' (CO 129/8: 64), Aberdeen was in no position to rescind the decision made by the man on the spot. However, in sanctioning the transfer of funding to the MES School, Aberdeen stressed that in return for the subsidy 'the utmost facility shall be afforded to Her Majesty's Government for

obtaining the services of persons educated by them for the performance of public duties in China' (ibid.: 65).

Soon after assuming office (May 1844), Davis was waited upon by James Legge, who, perhaps hoping that Pottinger's departure might signal a change of attitude in official quarters, again requested a plot of land for the Anglo-Chinese College. In a despatch to Stanley on 6 June 1844, Davis reported that he had put to Legge Pottinger's original suggestion – which the Colonial Office had endorsed – that the two institutions be amalgamated, a proposal which he felt had much to recommend it since they 'both profess a nearly common purpose, and have nearly a common origin' (CO 129/6: 112). The two institutions, however, chose not to act upon Davis's proposal in the months which followed Legge's meeting with Davis. The reluctance of the LMS and MES to find common ground, despite their similar backgrounds and goals, might be regarded as an early manifestation of the intense rivalry which at times characterised relations between the various missionary agencies involved in Hong Kong education during the nineteenth century.

Although Davis (like his predecessor) agreed to become its Patron, he quickly developed an antagonistic attitude towards the MES School (in much the same way that Pottinger had towards its rival). This antipathy is reflected in Davis's education report for 1845, in which he complained that the MES 'refuses altogether to coalesce with the Anglo-Chinese College or any other establishment' (*HKBB*, 1845: 27). For this reason, Davis argued, 'as well as that of its exclusively Chinese, and not European youth, I deem it very little deserving of encouragement, since we want European interpreters and not Chinese, who are seldom to be trusted' (ibid.: 27). Another source of Davis's dissatisfaction with the school, although (regrettably) he chooses not to elaborate on it, was that its 'conduct' had 'fallen exclusively into the hands of Americans' (ibid.: 27), a clear reference to the

influence of Bridgman, who had succeeded Dent as President in 1842, and its headmaster, Brown, who (as we shall see) was largely responsible for determining language policy and practice at the school. Davis's objections to Bridgman and Brown's influence on MES students, especially (one imagines) those chosen to assist the British in the political and economic spheres, may have stemmed from the growing commercial rivalry of the British and Americans in China during this period. Another factor may have been the strong opposition of the American firm Olyphant & Co. to the opium trade, in which Dent (and other British traders) had a substantial stake. As Smith (1965) points out, Olyphant & Co. had close links with American missionaries in China, providing them with free passage on their ships, financing their printing press, and sponsoring the *Chinese Repository*, which was edited by Bridgman. All of these factors – its refusal to merge with the Anglo-Chinese College, the questionable reliability of its Chinese students, the growing influence of its American management – prompted Davis to withdraw the Foreign Office allowance, a *volte-face* which meant that henceforth the MES would have to rely on public subscriptions to meet expenses.

Colonial Office records between 1843 and 1845 thus provide interesting evidence of the factors which shaped language policy in early colonial Hong Kong. First, this correspondence reveals that the impetus behind the introduction of English-language education came from Protestant missionary/voluntary societies rather than from the colonial administration. What is also significant is that, despite their similar religious, educational and linguistic objectives, the LMS and the MES were by no means united in implementing them. Second, the colonial government showed little real interest in promoting the study and use of English on the Island, certainly in the sense of wishing to anglicise its new subjects in the manner advocated by Macaulay; the administration's limited (and, as it

happened, short-lived) support for the MES was primarily motivated by the Foreign Office's pressing need for interpreters. In this respect, Aberdeen's despatch to Davis in March 1844 makes it quite clear that language policy in early colonial Hong Kong was closely linked to Britain's immediate political and economic interests in China. Third, Colonial Office records during this period reveal that decisions over language policy originated in Hong Kong rather than in the metropole, and thus provide further evidence to support the point made in the first two chapters about the primacy of the 'man on the spot' in the policy making process. As we have seen, the Crown's representatives in Hong Kong in the early 1840s, Pottinger and Davis, adopted markedly different attitudes towards the MES, which bears out another widely noted feature of British colonial policy, viz. that its character was often shaped by the prejudices and predilections of individual governors. Another point to emerge from the correspondence is that the devolution of responsibility for decision making was to a great extent determined by the vast distances which separated Britain's Asian and African colonies from Whitehall. Before the opening of the Suez Canal and the advent of the telegraph, it took around three months for a despatch from Hong Kong to reach London, several weeks for its contents to be deliberated in Whitehall, and a further three months for the reply to reach Hong Kong. The tardiness of the communication process forced the governor to make policy decisions in the light of local circumstances, and trust that these would receive the Colonial Secretary's blessing. The governor's need to take the initiative in policy formulation, and yet his awareness that any decision ultimately required Whitehall's approval, is reflected in the cautious language of the early despatches on education, notably Pottinger's to Stanley of 20 December 1843, in which he prefaces his change of policy towards the MES and LMS with expressions such as 'I have taken upon

myself ... to authorize the payment ...' (CO 129/2: 435), and 'I trust that your Lordship will approve of my having taken this step, pending the instructions ...' (ibid.: 436).

Thus far we have been examining the colonial and metropolitan authorities' changing policies towards the MES School and the Anglo-Chinese College. Although Colonial Office correspondence helps to illuminate official thinking in Hong Kong and London about language policy, it is important to emphasise that, although the British authorities might influence the operations of the MES and the LMS (e.g. through the provision or withdrawal of financial aid), ultimately they had little or no control over the content, medium and methods of education at the two schools. The MES School and the Anglo-Chinese College were administered by missionary/voluntary organisations; language policies and practices at the two institutions (and at the other private schools) reflected their founders' objectives and (particularly) the background, training and experience of those directly engaged in planning and delivering the language curriculum. The remainder of this section explores the nature, purposes and effects of language policies and practices in the three leading Anglo-Chinese mission schools in early colonial Hong Kong, and particularly those at the MES School, the first school of its type on the Island.

3.3.3 Language policy and practice at the MES School

In accordance with its founders' bilingual mission, the MES School placed equal emphasis on English and Chinese studies in its curriculum. In his report for 1841, Brown stressed that his pupils 'should be thoroughly versed in their own literature' otherwise they would never be able to 'transfuse into it the knowledge which they derive from foreign sources' (*CR*, October 1841: 584). It would appear, however, from Brown's reports that he attached more importance to English-medium instruction than to traditional Chinese education:

We open to our pupils the sources of knowledge that lie in English literature. While we deny to the Chinese youth nothing that can be gained from his native soil, we give him access to as much as possible of occidental lore ... That part of the man, which is so sadly neglected, to wit the reason, judgment, imagination, affections and conscience, is here subjected to the best culture we can give it through a foreign tongue. (*CR*, October 1842: 550)

Although Brown believed that English was the key to his students' enlightenment, an equal amount of time was devoted to Chinese studies. Like Stewart in the 1860s and 1870s, Brown argued that English should not be acquired at the expense of Chinese: 'It is essential that they should become masters of their own language' (*CR*, December 1846: 614).

Brown's reports indicate that the content and methods of Chinese education at the MES School were similar to those on the mainland. The Confucian classics, he reported, were 'taught after the fashion of the country' (*CR*, October 1842: 546). Though insistent that his pupils should study Chinese, Brown was critical of his school's Chinese curriculum, and particularly the students' style of learning, which involved 'the tedious process of imitating particular passages from the best authors, without even thinking' (*ibid.*: 549). According to Brown, the nature of traditional Chinese education was a fundamental cause of the lack of progress in Chinese society:

It teaches the people to look upon these books as the repositories of all that is necessary or worthy to be learned, and from the highest personage at court, to the lowest in the field or shop, all have become accustomed to listen to the voice of gray antiquity for instruction, and he that is the most patient listener, is the surest of preferment. The mind of the nation has been systematically taught not to think, and the reasoning faculty, like their written language, has long ago been arrested in its improvement. (*ibid.*: 549)

In Brown's view, the weaknesses of Chinese education stemmed from the inadequacies of the Chinese language as a medium for transmitting new knowledge and ideas. In his report for 1844, he argued that

The thoughts of these people have run in a very different channel to those of any other civilized nation. Their modes of expressing them subserve their own uses, will they be ours? We wish to teach them thoughts to diverge a

little from the beaten track, to take a wider range of objects, to become familiar with new truths. But as words are the vehicle of thought, new words must be formed to convey it over unexplored regions ... If any one could do it, it would be some one who has been educated through the medium of a foreign tongue, and thereby gained a knowledge of the new facts that call for new words to represent them ... (*CR*, December 1844: 637)

Brown believed that learning English would provide his students with the new vocabulary through which they could acquire new knowledge and ideas:

If left to themselves, they will be just what their ancestors have been for many generations, bound by the fetters of the most awkward and unsocial language ever spoken, to tread in their footsteps, thinking and knowing only what they thought and knew. So long as they know only their mother tongue, their thoughts must be bounded by its limits. They cannot go a step beyond this. But let them be taught to read and write and speak the English language and their minds are liberated. (*ibid.*: 638)

Students at the MES School learned to read, write and speak English through its use as the medium for imparting Western learning and by studying it as a language subject. Since the language (still less the content) of the English textbooks was not adapted to the needs of non-native learners, it is not surprising that MES students experienced considerable problems coping with English-medium instruction. Brown's reports, which understandably cast the school's activities in a favourable light, provide evidence that his pupils often found lessons heavy going, as this extract reveals:

A lesson in any book for the first two or three years after one of them enters the school, is at once both a lesson on language, and on the particular subject of which the book treats. Hence let it be arithmetic, geography, or history, or whatever else, the language must first be made intelligible, and the subject matter must be arrived at by this laborious process. We often find it necessary to spend more time in interpreting the textbook than in merely reciting the lesson. Not only every new word needs to be defined, but every new form of expression, and every particular idiom or combination of words; and it is not infrequently a half hour's task to unravel and expound a paragraph of moderate length so that the pupil shall clearly perceive, not merely what each part signifies, but how all the parts hinge upon one another, and are combined together so as to convey an unbroken train of thought. (*CR*, December 1843: 625)

The problems his students encountered when trying to read textbooks intended for English-speaking students underlined the fundamental difference between English-medium instruction for native and non-native speakers. The special problems of studying in a second language were brought home to Brown when the school was still based in Macau. In his first report, he pleaded for ‘books made expressly for the use of schools in which English is not the vernacular tongue’ (*CR*, October 1841: 574). As we shall see, Brown’s plea for linguistically and culturally appropriate teaching materials would be echoed by other educators in Hong Kong throughout the nineteenth century.

3.3.4 The influence of Western education on students at the MES School

In his 1844 report, Brown offered an unflattering assessment of the mental state of his students when they arrived at the school:

When a pupil is received into our school, he is young, ignorant of almost everything but the little affairs of his home, prejudiced against all that is not of Chinese origin, the dupe of superstition, trembling at the shaking of a leaf as if earth and air were people with malignant spirits, trained to worship all manner of senseless things ... When looking for the first time on a class of new pupils ... there is usually almost a universal expression of passive inanity pervading them. The black but staring, glassy eye and open mouth, bespeak little more than stupid wonder gazing out of emptiness. (*CR*, December 1844: 632)

Given such unpromising material, Brown believed that his principal task was ‘to change their vacancy into busy thought’ (*ibid.*: 634). The most revealing evidence of Brown’s attempts to influence his students’ beliefs and values can be found in their English compositions, which were occasionally published – ‘uncorrected,’ it was claimed, ‘by any but the writer of them’ (*CR*, July 1843: 364) – in the *Chinese Repository*. The first batch of compositions appeared in its July 1843 edition. A common thread running through these texts, which deal with various aspects of life on the Island, is the apparently beneficent

influence of Western people and ideas. In their compositions, Brown's students portray the Europeans in Hong Kong in a favourable light, while the Chinese are invariably described in derogatory terms: 'There are a great number of police men in the town English and Chinese [*sic*]. The Chinese ones are very cruel, they go out seeking after money in a wrongful way all the day' (*CR*, July 1843: 363). Their fellow countrymen are often characterised as cunning, deceitful and selfish:

The Chinese who are employed by [the Hong Kong] government are very bad. They go out and seek after money as much as they can. If a Chinese has business to go to the magistrate, he must go to those who know the English customs, and inquire how he can get the upper hand of his enemy, and they will tell him if they give him their interest, they are sure that he will get the better of his enemy, and they charge some money for it. (*ibid.*: 365)

In his report for 1843, Brown recounts with evident pleasure an episode which (he believed) revealed the positive influence his teaching was having on his students, particularly his emphasis on the value of truth: 'I have heard them, when some instance of falsehood or low cunning has occurred among the natives around them, say with a look of disgust, "that is Chinese"' (*CR*, October 1843: 628). Given the students' apparent contempt for the values and morals of their fellow countrymen, it is not surprising that the behaviour of the Chinese community in Hong Kong is often compared unfavourably with that of the European traders and officials: 'The greater part of the Chinese on this island, are opium eaters, proud and insolent. But the governor, and officers, that trade with the Chinese are with kindness and gentlemanly' [*sic*] (*CR*, July 1843: 365).

Further evidence of the alienation of the students from their cultural roots is provided in a composition by a senior pupil entitled 'Chinese Government', whose dominant theme is the injustice, dishonesty and corruption which pervaded the bureaucracy in China. 'The Chinese authorities,' he claimed, 'consist of thousands of men, among whom, even from the highest to the lowest, it is believed that there are few who act honestly and

faithfully in the discharge of the duties of their offices, and who take thought for the benefit of their people and treat them justly' (*CR*, November 1845: 506). Such was the incompetence and venality of Chinese officials that the writer asserted that 'If China had been governed by the English, half the number would have ruled the country better' (*ibid.*: 506). This was not the first instance of MES students extolling the benefits of British rule. The writer of the third composition published in 1843 observed that 'The laws of the island are very free', a state of affairs which he believed might serve as 'a good example to the Chinese government' (*CR*, July 1843: 365). The writer of the fourth composition believed that through the influence of British education and religion Hong Kong could act as a beacon for the enlightenment of China: 'I hope this island will become more dignified by spreading over the country light and knowledge' (*ibid.*: 368).

Whether the style of the compositions was a true reflection of the students' proficiency in English, and even if it was, whether the ideas and opinions were genuinely their own, is impossible to verify. What the compositions do reveal, however, is Brown's desire to change his students' traditional modes of thought by exposing them to – or, perhaps more accurately, imposing on them – the Christian faith, Western learning and the English language. It would appear, therefore, that the first Anglo-Chinese school in Hong Kong was a site for the exercise of what to modern eyes is a particularly pernicious form of cultural imperialism.

As it happened, this first experiment in Anglo-Chinese education proved to be short-lived. In consequence of the withdrawal of government support and the departure of several of its original benefactors, the state of the MES's finances became increasingly parlous in the late 1840s. The school was finally forced to close in 1849, having according to Eitel (1890-91: 317) 'lost its hold upon the sympathies of the foreign community'. The demise of

the MES School left Legge's Anglo-Chinese College as the only school in Hong Kong offering an education in English and Chinese.

3.3.5 The Anglo-Chinese College

Notwithstanding Pottinger's rejection of its request for land, and the subsequent withdrawal of its Foreign Office grant, the Anglo-Chinese College opened in Hong Kong in January 1844, albeit with different objectives from those which underlay its Malacca operation. The loss of government backing forced the LMS to change the college's original (and apparently unfulfilled) mission of encouraging the reciprocal cultivation of European and Chinese literature to one directed towards a more specific missionary purpose, that of training a native priesthood (Legge, 1905). However, the college's transformation from an institution of higher education into a theological seminary proved to be unsuccessful, principally because there was little demand for religious education on the Island (Smith, 1965). Quickly recognising the failure of its new policy, the LMS decided in 1845 to open a preparatory school from which (it was hoped) would emerge a steady supply of students with the requisite zeal and ability to undertake theological studies in the seminary. It would appear, however, that Legge's hopes of training a corps of Chinese ministers at the Anglo-Chinese College were not realised – in fact, it failed to produce a single native minister between 1844 and 1856 – and in his report on educational activity in 1851, Eitel (1890-91: 319) stated that the college was 'serving the purpose of a public school rather than that of a theological seminary as originally intended'.

The failure of its religious objectives stemmed largely from the fact that students at the Anglo-Chinese College were apparently more interested in learning English than training for the priesthood. The majority of students who enrolled at the college during this

period appear to have done so for purely pragmatic reasons: a smattering of English was apparently sufficient for an enterprising Chinese boy to work as an interpreter or clerk for a European concern in Hong Kong or in one of the treaty ports. The economic advantages of an English education are illustrated by the fact that a mission-school graduate could expect to earn between \$25 and \$100 per month in a mercantile office, whereas a minister could hope for only \$20-25 (Eitel, 1890-91). Thus, one of the main problems facing mission-school administrators was that their students were primarily motivated by the prospect of a potentially lucrative career in business rather than by the spiritual satisfaction which they would doubtless derive from the conversion of their fellow countrymen to Christianity. The important role which English played in socio-economic advancement on the China coast meant that students often left school after acquiring only a rudimentary knowledge of the language. As we saw in Chapter Two, this phenomenon was by no means unique to Hong Kong.

Although enrolments at the Anglo-Chinese College were quite healthy, Legge decided to close the college in 1856. The immediate cause of its closure was the increasing tension in Sino-British relations prior to the second Opium War (Smith, 1965). The underlying reason, however, seems to have been Legge's growing disenchantment with the results of Anglo-Chinese mission education. As we shall see in Chapter Four, Legge's recognition of the fact that few mission-school graduates became genuine converts appears to have strongly influenced his thinking on the future direction of language policy in the colony.

3.3.6 St Paul's College

The other significant initiative in Anglo-Chinese education during this period was St Paul's College, which was established in 1849 under the auspices of the Church of England. The impetus behind its development came from the colony's first Anglican bishop, George Smith, who was both an active teacher at the college and (as we shall see) a strong influence on the government's Education Committee during the 1850s. Smith had made an exploratory visit to Hong Kong in the mid-1840s, painting a depressing picture of life in the settlement (Smith, 1847). Upon his return to England (January 1847), Smith wrote to the Colonial Secretary, Earl Grey, recommending 'the establishment of an efficient educational institution for the benefit of the Chinese at Hong Kong, in which a European Principal of Christian zeal and ability might dispense the benefits of an education in the literature, the science, and religion of the West' (CO 129/22: 270). Smith argued that this 'practical measure' would not only be a tangible means of discharging 'an important Christian duty and responsibility', but would also have 'obvious advantages of a secular kind':

From among the recipients of this bounty of a Christian government the colonial executive might look with justice for a reinforcement of native interpreters, who by the efficiency gained from a European education, and by the principles of moral integrity instilled during the progress of Christian instruction, might be placed in a position to repay the debt of gratitude in some subordinate official trust, and might also effect much toward leavening with the influence of Christian loyalty the whole mass of native society. (ibid.: 270)

In his reply (March 1847), Grey informed Smith that he could not consent to his proposal as it would increase 'the already heavy expense of the public establishments' on the Island (ibid.: 286).

Smith appears not to have been daunted by Grey's rebuff, for in July 1849 he wrote to the Colonial Secretary again requesting financial assistance for a 'Chinese college at Hong Kong' (CO 129/31: 284). Although he stated that its mission was the training of

Christian ministers, Smith suggested that the college might have a somewhat wider purpose than the propagation of the gospel. Smith claimed that in return for its support 'the British Government may expect to reap many advantages from the existence of such an institution'. Perhaps mindful of the circumstances surrounding the withdrawal of the Foreign Office grant from the LMS and its award to the MES, Smith argued that the new college would 'add to the number of intelligent, well-conducted, and well-educated native youths, who would be in a position to render valuable services as interpreters, – to spread abroad a favourable estimate of British Christianity & civilization, – and to raise generally the tone of international intercourse' (ibid.: 285). After a two-year delay, the Foreign Office approved the payment to St Paul's College of the annual grant which had previously been paid to the LMS and MES. As had been the case with the MES, the metropolitan government made it clear that the allowance was awarded on condition that each year the college trained a certain number of students as interpreters for the consular service (Eitel, 1890-91). Despite this proviso, Endacott (1973) claims that St Paul's failed to produce a single government interpreter during the entire period (1851-1866) it received the grant. Indeed, as early as 1857 Governor Bowring was complaining to the Colonial Office that 'not a single individual from that college has yet been declared competent to undertake even the meanest department of an Interpreter's duty' (CO 129/64: 80).

Apart from the disbursal of the Foreign Office grant (which came with strings firmly attached), the British authorities adopted a *laissez-faire* policy towards the Anglo-Chinese mission schools. Although the colonial and metropolitan governments appear to have welcomed the moral and cultural influence of the mission schools, they provided little tangible support for their efforts to promote the study and use of English in the new settlement. Indeed, it was not until the introduction of Stewart's grant-in-aid scheme in

1873 that the colonial administration was able to exert a degree of influence over the content and methods of education in the mission schools. Prior to this, government control over education in the colony was confined to the schools directly under its auspices, which, as the next section reveals, were mainly Chinese-medium.

3.4 Language policies and practices in the government schools

3.4.1 The adoption of a vernacular-oriented policy

In the period between 1842 and 1859, government initiatives in the field of education were limited to the provision of modest financial assistance to the Chinese schools, which comprised the existing village schools and ones established in Victoria in the aftermath of the British occupation. The beginnings of government involvement in vernacular education can be traced to a letter written by Charles Gutzlaff, the administration's Chinese Secretary, to Governor Davis on 13 December 1845 proposing that, 'as in all other British Colonies', the authorities support the native schools, which he claimed were in a 'miserable' state (CO 129/16: 29). Gutzlaff (a Prussian missionary) recommended that the government should contribute \$10 per month to schools with more than fifteen pupils, a gesture which he felt 'would leave a most favourable impression upon the minds of the parents' (ibid.: 30). Davis forwarded Gutzlaff's proposal to Lord Stanley on 20 January 1846, adding his opinion that 'a very limited contribution, perhaps less than that proposed, would have a good effect' (ibid.: 25). By the time Davis's despatch reached London, William Gladstone had replaced Stanley as Colonial Secretary in Peel's Tory administration. In his response of 17 April 1846, Gladstone informed Davis that it was impossible to arrive at a decision without more detailed information about the nature of the instruction provided in the native schools. Although Colonial Office records indicate that Gladstone and his senior official, Sir James

Stephen, regarded the missionary societies as the most effective means of promoting education in the colonies (CO 129/19: 239-254), the metropolitan government eventually resolved to support the native schools rather than those operated by the missions, and to this end Gladstone's successor Lord Grey wrote to Davis announcing his approval of Gutzlaff's original proposal that a \$10 monthly grant be made to three Chinese schools at Victoria, Stanley and Aberdeen (CO 129/22: 205-206).

The policy to promote vernacular education appears to have been motivated by Whitehall's desire to avoid what Grey termed the 'religious difficulties' that were likely to arise from the use of public funds to assist denominational schools, a clear reference to the often bitter sectarian rivalries which afflicted educational development in early Victorian Britain (Eitel, 1890-91). The decision to encourage the native schools thus sprang more from a desire to avoid inflaming religious feeling in Hong Kong than from a deep-seated desire to promote Chinese education.

Another factor behind the adoption of a vernacular-oriented policy seems to have been the colonial government's desire to use education as a means to conciliate the Island's Chinese inhabitants. This is apparent from Gutzlaff's letter and Davis's despatch (see above), but was made even more explicit in its 1849 education report, which stated that the provision of education was a 'most effectual means to conciliate the native inhabitants, and to render our Government popular among them' (*HKBB*, 1849: 127). In its 1852 report, the Education Committee expressed satisfaction that government aid for the village schools was apparently 'well appreciated by the natives', and further claimed that no measure was 'better calculated to conciliate and give them confidence' (*HKBB*, 1852: 191). The colonial regime's promotion of vernacular education as a means of securing its subjects' confidence and gratitude might be compared to the Orientalist policy in India (see 2.1.2), although in

this case the class whose appreciation and co-operation was sought, the traditional Indian elite, differed markedly in character from the Chinese working class who were the object of the vernacular policy in Hong Kong. Given the cultural chasm which separated the European and Chinese communities, and the simmering animosity which characterised their relations, it might also be noted that the need for conciliation – from the administration’s perspective – was much more urgent in Hong Kong during the Opium War era than in Hastings’ India.

While the avoidance of religious controversy and the need to conciliate the natives seem to have been the main factors behind the adoption of a pro-vernacular policy, it is also worth noting that both the colonial and metropolitan governments were apparently attracted by what Grey described as the ‘extremely moderate’ sums involved. As the previous chapter revealed, parsimony should never be discounted as a factor shaping language policy and practice in the Empire. Indeed, as was noted in our discussion of the 1813 Charter Act (see 2.1.4), the inability or reluctance of the British to provide adequate funding for educational development meant that the objectives of colonial language policies were often not realised in practice. A case in point appears to be the Hong Kong government’s policy towards the native schools during the 1850s. In his education report for 1857, Governor Bowring – echoing his predecessors’ views on the need for conciliation – observed that if the local administration dispensed ‘a prudent liberality in the employment of competent native teachers’ it was possible that ‘the rising generation of our Chinese fellow subjects’ would not be ‘such aliens to us in feelings and habits as the great bulk of the population is at present’ (*HKBB*, 1857: 246). In Bowring’s view, it was ‘only through the native schools’ that ‘this very desirable change’ could be effected (*ibid.*: 246). However, in a despatch to the Colonial Office the same year, Bowring expressed his dissatisfaction with educational

development in the colony, adding – with more than a hint of resignation – that ‘the present state of matters here, and of our relations with China, the crippled position of our finances and the urgent claims of many other matters on our attention makes it impossible for me to do more’ (CO 129/63: 379-380).

3.4.2 The policy of the Education Committee (1847-1859)

After Whitehall had approved his proposal, Davis appointed an *ad hoc* committee to inquire into the state of the native schools with a view to making recommendations for the future direction of Chinese education on the Island. In its report (November 1847), the committee advocated the ‘ultimate introduction’ of Bible study in the schools, but felt that (in the current circumstances) any interference with the Confucian curriculum would be ‘injudicious’ (Lobscheid, 1859: 21). For this reason, it decided that instruction in the government schools should be confined to ‘reading, writing and arithmetic, after the Chinese mode’ (ibid.: 22). In accordance with this recommendation, the government’s Education Committee, which had been formally established in December 1847, initially made no attempt to interfere with the content, medium or methods of education in the Chinese schools, although in 1850, following its appointment of a Christian teacher, the Committee had to be cautioned by a senior official against ‘any interference with the religious prejudices of the natives’ (cited in Eitel, 1890-91: 318). However, the appointment of a Chinese Christian teacher, and the fact that the decision was not rescinded, indicate that the Education Committee (with the tacit support of the government) had already embarked upon its ‘ultimate’ goal of introducing religious teaching in the aided schools; and, in this respect, it is significant that in March 1847, some eight months before the *ad hoc* committee’s report, Davis had observed in a despatch to Grey that if the Chinese schools

were ‘eventually placed in charge of native Christian teachers, bred up by the Protestant missionaries, it would afford the most rational prospect of converting the native population of the island’ (*HKBB*, 1846: 231).

The policy to promote Christianity in the government schools gained in momentum with the appointment in 1850 of George Smith to the Education Committee, which from its inception had been dominated by missionaries or officials with strong religious leanings. Two years later, Smith became the permanent Chairman of the Committee, from which position he dominated government education for the next decade. In consequence of Smith’s influence, the native schools quickly assumed the character of mission schools: the Bible and other Christian works (in Chinese) were added to the Confucian curriculum, prayers were introduced at the beginning of the school day, and Chinese Christians were appointed to teaching positions (Eitel, 1890-91). Indeed, according to Eitel, such was his grip on local education that the government schools became feeders for St Paul’s College, which (as we have seen) Smith had been instrumental in founding.

During the 1850s, the government became the major provider of Chinese education. This appears to have been particularly the case in the late 1850s, when, as we noted in 3.2.2, there was an influx of refugees from China. The marked increase in enrolments in the public sector during this period can perhaps also be attributed to the work of the first Inspector of Schools, the Rev. William Lobscheid, a German missionary, who had been appointed by Bowring at the Education Committee’s behest in 1857. Lobscheid’s appointment is interesting in two particular respects. First, the initiative behind the creation of the post came from the colonial government (and specifically from influential members of the Committee) rather than from the metropolitan authorities, as is clear from Bowring’s despatch to the Colonial Office of 18 June 1857 requesting approval for the appointment

(CO 129/63: 378-380). Second, in recommending him for the position Bowring attached far more importance to Lobscheid's personal qualities, particularly his 'considerable acquaintance with the vernacular', than to his foreign nationality (which seems not to have troubled him at all).

Although Lobscheid's supervisory work may have helped increase enrolments in the late 1850s, it should be emphasised that during this period attendance at school was not compulsory. As the figures in Table 2 suggest, in the early years of British rule only a small percentage of children went to school, a point which needs to be borne in mind when assessing the impact of the government's education policies on the Chinese community. During this period, the vast majority of children were beyond the reach of colonial education, and therefore remained untouched by the religious, cultural and linguistic influences which the administration was evidently intent on bringing to bear on the native schools. For the minority who did – for perhaps one or two years – come within the ambit of government schooling, it is doubtful whether the political and religious objectives which underlay the colonial regime's policies were fulfilled to any great extent, for the evidence suggests that the authorities were by no means determined or systematic in their pursuit of these aims. In 1854, for example, the Education Committee reported that government education was 'at almost its lowest ebb':

It has neither the means of present good nor the elements of future advantage. It has neither suitable buildings, suitable masters, nor suitable supervision. As the Government has expressed no intention of originating an efficient scheme and voting the requisite funds, it does not lie within our province to do more than report what now exists ... (*HKBB*, 1854: 224)

As we have seen, the Committee's dissatisfaction with the quality and extent of educational provision was echoed by Bowring in his despatch to the Colonial Office in 1857.

While the promotion of religious teaching was the most obvious manifestation of the Education Committee's control over native education, this was not the only change initiated in the 1850s. During this period, the Committee also sought to expand the scope of the traditional curriculum by introducing elementary instruction in geography and – most significantly from the perspective of the present study – the English language.

3.4.3 The introduction of English language teaching

Given the problems and controversies associated with the study and use of English in colonial Hong Kong, it is interesting that the introduction of ELT in two government schools in 1853 merits only a passing remark in that year's Education Committee report. There is no fanfare to herald this historically significant development; just a simple statement that 'two Chinese pupil teachers' from St Paul's College were attending the schools in Victoria and Wong-nei-chung 'for the purpose of teaching English' (*HKBB*, 1853: 208). The report also notes that seven pupils from the government schools were selected to attend St Paul's in order that they might receive 'a better course of instruction' (*ibid.*: 208).

The prominent role played by St Paul's in these developments suggests that George Smith was the prime mover behind the introduction of ELT in the government sector. Eitel (1890-91), however, claims that the initiative was a direct consequence of James Legge's accession to the Education Committee. Eitel also claims that Legge was behind the introduction of half-yearly prizes in the public schools, including one of \$1.00 for the pupil showing the greatest proficiency in English. As Inspector of Schools from 1879 to 1897, and as a resident of the colony (on and off) from 1862 to 1877, Eitel was well placed to comment on education in early colonial Hong Kong. From a research perspective, it is also worth noting that in compiling his chronicle of Hong Kong education Eitel may have had

access to records that are no longer available. While (for these reasons) Eitel's account of the introduction of ELT in 1853 merits careful attention, there is evidence to suggest that the initiative may not have originated with Legge, whom Eitel (*ibid.*: 321) describes as 'the principal local advocate of combined Anglo-Chinese teaching'. Eitel reports that Legge joined the Education Committee (at the government's invitation) on 13 September 1853, and that ELT was introduced in the 'autumn' of that year. This does not, however, accord with the education report for 1853 (dated 16 January 1854), which states that the two St Paul's students had been teaching English 'since the month of May last' (*HKBB*, 1853: 208). This suggests that the decision to introduce ELT in the government schools had been made at least five months before Legge's appointment. If the introduction of ELT did indeed predate Legge's accession to the Committee, it may indicate that Smith was the driving force behind the scheme.

If Smith was indeed its progenitor, we need to ask what his motives were in introducing the policy. As the head of the recently established St Paul's College, Smith was not without a personal interest in promoting ELT on the Island: his institution – which had just been awarded the Foreign Office grant – would be able to select the most promising students from the schools under the Education Committee's auspices. From Smith's perspective, having access to the best local students might help his institution attain a position of dominance over Hong Kong's other mission schools, including Legge's Anglo-Chinese College. Aside from the sectional interests of the Anglican Church, it might be argued that the introduction of ELT was an inevitable consequence of the Education Committee's policy to engraft Western knowledge and religion on to the traditional Confucian curriculum, an initiative that (as we have seen) was apparently motivated by the government's desire to conciliate its Chinese subjects. In this respect, it is interesting that

the final paragraph of the 1853 Education report contained the following recommendation (which, since it was written in January 1854, may indeed reflect Legge's influence):

We think that the study of the English language should in this, an English colony, be encouraged as much as possible, not merely in regard to its utility as a mental exercise and a means of obtaining what is valuable in English literature, but in regard to the effects to be produced by such a knowledge in preventing misunderstanding, and establishing a bond of union between the many thousand Chinese who have made this place their residence and the handful of Europeans by whom they are governed. (*HKBB*, 1853: 208)

Eitel (1890-91: 322) cites (inaccurately) a fragment from the above paragraph – 'the study of English should in this English colony be encouraged as much as possible' – and then adds the following commentary:

This recommendation was in harmony with a strong feeling now arising once more among the European residents who frequently complained that the whole educational energies of the Colony served almost exclusively to benefit the Chinese and promoted Chinese literature, whilst the children of European and other non-Chinese residents were (owing to their unwillingness to attend what were virtually Chinese Schools) almost entirely neglected. (*ibid.*: 322)

Eitel's interpretation of the Education Committee's recommendation is somewhat puzzling. There is no reference in the report to European dissatisfaction with the lack of English education (although, as we saw in 3.2.2, such a sentiment did exist during the 1850s); nor is there any reference to educational provision for European residents in the report as a whole, which was understandable as the Committee was responsible for superintending 'Chinese education'. (In this respect, it is interesting that Eitel's interpretation provides further evidence that language policy was at this time directed mainly towards the promotion of vernacular education.) While it is true that the final paragraph of the report differs markedly in content and tone from the workaday paragraphs which precede it, it is difficult to see how the paragraph can be viewed as anything other than a statement of the Committee's desire to encourage English teaching in the government Chinese schools.

The Committee sought to justify its recommendation by pointing to the pedagogical and political benefits which it believed would flow from the introduction of ELT. In respect to the former, the intellectual and cultural lives of native students would be enriched by the ‘mental exercise’ involved in the study of English and the enlightenment which they would derive from reading English literature. In respect to the latter, the political and economic suzerainty of the British colonisers would be secured by the ‘bond of union’ which would be forged between the Chinese and European communities through their shared knowledge of the English language. The impact of the unequal distribution of power on language policy is unmistakable. Even though Hong Kong’s Chinese community (of around 37,000 in 1853) vastly outnumbered the ‘handful’ of Europeans, the fact of British sovereignty meant that the Chinese would be expected to learn English in order to understand their European overlords. It would appear that the Education Committee did not consider the possibility that this ‘bond of union’ might be more effectively sealed by the governing class learning the language(s) of its Chinese subjects.

The evidence therefore suggests that the policy to promote ELT in 1853 was introduced by George Smith (although Legge may subsequently have become its most vocal advocate), and was motivated (in part) by the Education Committee’s desire to bridge the linguistic gulf which separated the Chinese and European communities in the early years of colonial rule. The mere recording of its intentions, however, was no guarantee that they would be fulfilled in practice. In its report the following year, the Committee noted that ‘two Chinese lads’ (presumably from St Paul’s) were teaching English in two government schools. The 1854 report also recommended ‘the appointment in each school capable of enlargement of an assistant schoolmaster, with a knowledge of the English language’ (*HKBB*, 1854: 120). This (it might be recalled) was the report in which the Committee had

lamented that government education was 'at almost its lowest ebb'. Notwithstanding the sorry state of the public schools, the administration appears to have acted upon the Committee's recommendation within months of the report's publication (16 February 1855), for on 22 June 1855 Governor Bowring wrote to the Secretary of State, Lord John Russell, announcing that he had appointed 'at the earnest recommendation' of the Education Committee 'a young Chinese named Ho Aloy to be a teacher of English language in the Chinese school of Victoria' (CO 129/50: 311).

Ho's appointment is revealing in several respects. First, the decision to employ him was made in Hong Kong rather than in London, and therefore provides a further example of an important language-related initiative being made by the man on the spot, or, in this case, the men on the spot since the initiative came from the Education Committee rather than from Bowring. Although Ho's appointment ultimately required Whitehall's blessing, Bowring appears to have written his despatch on the assumption that the Colonial Secretary would not withhold his assent (as in fact proved to be the case). Another revealing feature of Ho's appointment is the fact that his monthly salary of \$15 was \$5 more than that of the other government teachers, including the head of the school where Ho was employed (*HKBB*, 1855: 262). By paying its only English teacher 50% more than its Chinese teachers, the government not only demonstrated that it placed a higher value on instruction in English than in Chinese, but also provided its Chinese subjects with tangible evidence of the rewards that might flow from a knowledge of English. The other interesting point relating to Ho's appointment, particularly in view of the intentions which underlay the introduction of ELT, is that the Education Committee chose to recruit a Chinese teacher of English rather than a Briton. Indeed, in the period between 1853 and 1862, the year of Frederick Stewart's arrival, ELT in the government sector was exclusively in the hands of young Chinese. The

evidence suggests that the employment of non-native English teachers was dictated by economics. Although Ho's pay was significantly higher than that of the other government teachers, it was a pittance compared to the kind of salary a native speaker might command, particularly one recruited from Britain. This is illustrated by the fact that Stewart's starting salary was £500 per annum (CO 129/82: 583). In marked contrast, the 'two Chinese lads' who introduced ELT in 1853 cost the government a total of £5 per annum (*HKBB*, 1854: 120).

The Education Committee's reports for 1855 and 1856 indicate that Ho's school in Victoria was the only one in the public sector providing ELT. Government records provide little information about the content or methods of instruction at the school. There is some evidence to suggest, however, that the quality of English teaching and learning may not have been entirely to the Committee's satisfaction. This evidence is provided in Alfred Weatherhead's description of life in Hong Kong between 1855 and 1859. Weatherhead, a government clerk, has little to say about education, but in his account of the use of pidgin English on the Island he includes the following remark, which indicates that pidgin English rather than the Queen's English may have been the focus of instruction: 'In the Government school for Chinese children this strange jargon forms a regular branch of their studies' (Weatherhead, ?1859: 14).

It would appear that rudimentary English teaching was extended to some of the other government schools in the late 1850s. In 1857 the Education Committee reported that 'Some of the principal schools have a class of instruction in English' (*HKBB*, 1857: 168), while in November of the following year the *Hong Kong Government Gazette* (27 November 1858: 104) informed parents that 'Schools for gratuitous instruction have been established by the Government of Hong Kong ... wherein the Chinese Elementary books,

their Classics, Geography, etc., and the English language, are taught by competent Native Teachers'. The announcement in the *HKGG* may have been one manifestation of the colonial regime's desire, at a time of mounting tension in the Pearl River Delta, to conciliate the Island's rapidly expanding Chinese community. The evidence suggests that this was a central objective of the Education Committee during this period. In its 1857 report, for example, the Committee noted that 'the confidence of Chinese parents seems to be decidedly on the increase' in consequence of the 'better system' introduced by the new Inspector of Schools, William Lobscheid (*HKBB*, 1857: 173). The Committee claimed that an important 'indirect result' of these improvements would be 'a wider recognition in Hong Kong and its vicinity of the paternal character and intentions' of the British authorities (*ibid.*: 173).

In its account of developments in 1859, the Board of Education (which superseded the Education Committee in January 1860) reported that 'three younger Chinese teachers' were teaching the 'elements of English reading' in eight schools in and around Victoria (*HKBB*, 1859: 197). Perhaps the most revealing feature of this development is the fact that the schools where the three peripatetic teachers worked were located in the commercial heart of Hong Kong rather than in the outlying villages. The concentration of English-language education in Victoria during this period provides further evidence of the phenomenon noted in Chapter Two, that the study and use of English in the Empire tended to be confined to the urban areas. Outside the centres of business and administration, English was rarely used, and in consequence there was little demand for instruction in the language.

Government records from the late 1850s and early 1860s suggest that the policy to extend the provision of ELT was not entirely successful. In its report for 1860, the Board of

Education expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of English teaching in the public schools. For James Legge, an increasingly influential figure in education circles, the source of the problem lay in the fact that the young Chinese teachers employed by the government possessed only a rudimentary knowledge of English. Legge made this observation in a minute to the Board in July 1860 proposing a new system of management in the public sector. At the heart of Legge's scheme was the recommendation that government-sponsored ELT be concentrated in a flagship school supervised by a European master. The government's approval of Legge's plan resulted in the establishment in 1862 of the Central School under Fredrick Stewart. The Central School was the colonial government's first major initiative in the area of English-language education, and is the focus of the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Language in Hong Kong education during the Frederick Stewart era (1860-1876)

This chapter examines language policies and practices in Hong Kong education between 1860 and 1876. This period might be characterised as the Frederick Stewart era, for it was during these years that the young Scotsman built the colony's public education system from the blueprint prepared by James Legge. The chapter begins with an analysis of the political, economic and social factors which influenced language education in the colony between 1860 and 1913. This section therefore provides the contextual background against which to view developments in English and Chinese education in this and the next two chapters. The second section examines the nature and purposes of Legge's scheme to establish the Central School. The final section focuses on language policies and practices at the flagship Anglo-Chinese school during Stewart's Headmastership.

4.1 The context of colonial language policy: Part 2 (1860-1913)

In 3.1 we examined the political, economic and demographic forces which shaped language policies and practices during the pioneering years of colonial rule, when Hong Kong served as a bridgehead for the promotion of British commercial interests in China. In many respects, these chaotic early years constitute a distinct period in the colony's history (Bickers, 1997; Liu, 1997). Like the 1842-1859 period, the years between 1860 and 1913 may be regarded as being 'of a piece' in terms of Hong Kong's political, economic and social development (Lethbridge, 1978). The three sub-sections below analyse the contextual

factors that influenced language policies and practices during this important period in the colony's educational history.

4.1.1 The nature of colonial governance in Hong Kong

In his first gubernatorial report, Sir Hercules Robinson (1859-1865) observed that Hong Kong was 'so totally unlike any other British dependency' that he hesitated to offer a definitive judgement on its condition and prospects (*HKBB*, 1859: 150). Although Hong Kong was never regarded as a typical colony, its system of government would have been instantly recognisable to a career administrator like Robinson. As in other Crown Colonies, governance in Hong Kong was vested in a Governor, who was assisted and advised by an Executive Council, a largely rubber-stamp legislature composed mainly of British civil servants and merchants, and a bureaucracy whose higher echelons were dominated by British officials.

One important consequence of British sovereignty and the monopoly of political power by an oligarchy of British officials and businessmen was that English functioned as the principal language of government for the greater part of the colony's history (Chen, 2001). The imposition of colonial rule also resulted in the transplantation of the English legal system to Hong Kong (Chen, 1985). Although in the run-up to 1997 British officials were wont to engage in mantra-like recitations about the importance of preserving the rule of law in the future SAR, it is questionable whether the apparently beneficent English system had been just or efficient in the Hong Kong context (Chan, 1997), particularly during the period covered by the present study (Munn, 2001). As Cheung (1997: 51) has pointed out,

Colonial subjects were governed by a law that they could hardly read or comprehend. Legislative debates were conducted in a language alien to the

majority of the people. Defendants in criminal cases did not have the right to fully understand the trial. The resulting language barrier made a complete mockery of the common law legal system which was supposed to uphold the cardinal legal principles of accessibility and equality.

The use of English in the administrative and legal domains had a significant bearing on language policies and practices in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Any Chinese who aspired to a clerical position in the public sector was expected to possess some degree of proficiency in English. The perception that a knowledge of English might be the means to economic advancement seems to have provided a strong inducement to young urban Chinese to learn the language (or at least its rudiments), and this in turn created a demand for English teaching in the schools. It is perhaps significant that the demand for English was not especially strong during the early years of British rule, a phenomenon which can partly be attributed to the uncertainty which existed in the 1840s and 1850s over Hong Kong's long-term political and economic future. It was only when British administration assumed a more settled character and the economy began to flourish that a demand for English slowly began to arise. This stability and prosperity began to emerge in the 1860s.

The point here is that the demand for English teaching was intimately connected to the role of the language in the colonial milieu. The British did not adopt English as the official language in order to promote its study and use in the colony; rather, it was an inevitable manifestation of British sovereignty (a sovereignty, it should be remembered, which ultimately rested on military and naval power). In this respect, the example of India in the 1830s and 1840s is instructive, for it was only after English had replaced Persian in the bureaucracy and the courts, and particularly after the adoption of a public-sector recruitment policy giving preferential treatment to English-educated Indians, that certain

sections of the Indian population began to clamour for instruction in the language (see 2.1.4).

While its use in the public sector was undoubtedly an important factor behind the demand for English in Hong Kong during the nineteenth-century, of perhaps even greater significance was the instrumental role the language was perceived to play in the business and professional domains. Although the use of English in the private sector stemmed partly from its official status, and in this respect its use in the courts seems especially significant, it was also a natural consequence of the long-standing British trading presence in China and the Far East, and the increasingly external orientation of the colony's economy after 1860.

4.1.2 The emergence of Hong Kong as an entrepôt

A fundamental principle of British policy was that each colony should be economically self-sufficient (Fieldhouse, 1982). This meant that the nature and extent of educational provision in a particular dependency were largely determined by the state of the public finances, whose health generally mirrored its level of economic development. In 3.1.2 we saw that economic progress in early colonial Hong Kong had been unexpectedly slow. One consequence of this was that even if the government had been interested in promoting education, its ambitions would have been frustrated by the parlous state of its finances. During the second half of the nineteenth century, however, Hong Kong's economy began to prosper, and as a result the colonial government was in a position – if it wished – to devote more money to educational development.

According to Legge (1874), the turning point in Hong Kong's social and economic progress was the influx of refugees in the mid-1850s from China, where conditions were disturbed by the Taiping uprising. This influx not only led to a significant increase in Hong

Kong's population (from 37,536 in 1853 to 121,497 in 1865), but also altered the character of the colony's Chinese community (Tsai, 1993). Whereas the earliest arrivals on the Island had been the 'lowest dregs of native society' (Smith, 1847: 508), the Chinese who flocked to the colony in the 1850s and 1860s included a significant proportion of families. The arrival of increasing numbers of women and children changed the ratio of males to females in the colony: whereas in 1844 this had stood at 5 to 1, by 1869 it was 2.7 to 1 (Welsh, 1993). It is also significant that the new arrivals included wealthy businessmen. The influx of a 'better class' of Chinese during this period appears to have lifted the colony's economy out of the doldrums. Stimulated by the demographic changes of the 1850s and 1860s, Hong Kong's entrepôt-based economy steadily expanded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The same period also witnessed a significant increase in the colony's population (from 124,198 in 1870 to 456,739 in 1911) (Jarman, 1996).

The colony's role as an entrepôt centre undoubtedly influenced policies, practices and attitudes towards the teaching and learning of English. The entrepôt trade created a demand for various kinds of commercial, financial and professional services, whose operation depended on the availability of a corps of English-educated clerks, translators, interpreters, compradors and other functionaries (Tsai, 1993). Unfortunately, little is known about the nature and extent of English-language use in the entrepôt-related infrastructure during this period. Indeed, given that the economy has often been regarded as Hong Kong's *raison d'être*, that English has been perceived to play an instrumental role in the successful functioning of that economy, and that the English-language needs of business have traditionally been an important influence on language-in-education policy, it is perhaps surprising that it is only in the post-1997 era that substantial empirical data have been collected on workplace language use (Evans and Green, 2001).

As we have already seen, there is considerable evidence that young Chinese males were motivated to study English by the belief that the ability to write or speak the language might open up employment opportunities in Hong Kong's business sector. While some Chinese professionals may have required highly sophisticated English skills to function in the workplace, it is arguable that most employees would have needed only a rudimentary knowledge of the language. This contention is founded on the widely reported fact that pidgin English was the usual medium of communication between Europeans and Chinese in nineteenth-century Hong Kong. We will examine pidgin English and other aspects of language use in the second part of 4.1.3. Before we turn to these issues, however, we need to describe the somewhat singular society that emerged in Hong Kong in the second half of the nineteenth century.

4.1.3 Language and society in colonial Hong Kong

Hong Kong society during the period under review bore all the hallmarks of an arranged – and certainly unconsummated – marriage between Confucius and Victoria. One senses that Governor Robinson's initial bewilderment with Hong Kong stemmed in part from his observing the highly unusual society that had evolved in the colony during the early years of British rule. Before its cession to Britain, the Island had been home to a few isolated fishing villages. When the British annexed Hong Kong they did not therefore assume control of a sizeable 'captive' population. As we have seen, the Island's indigenous inhabitants were rapidly subsumed by the huge influx of Chinese from Kwangtung and Fukien from the mid-1850s onwards. These newcomers – initially single males; later whole families (some of means and rank) – came to Hong Kong of their own volition, often in search of short-term protection or profit. The Chinese community in urban Hong Kong was

therefore mainly transient in character, and thus stood in marked contrast to the settled farming communities of the New Territories. At the apex of this overwhelmingly Chinese society was a small European community of officials, merchants and professionals. The term ‘apex’ in this context seems especially apposite since the European elite generally resided high up on the Peak, a quintessentially British hill station from which even the most respectable Chinese residents were barred (Wesley-Smith, 1994). Down below in the bazaars and tenements of Taipingshan thousands of Chinese lived cheek by jowl in conditions a world away from the expatriate milieu of tennis and tea parties.

In his account of the colony’s early history, Eitel (1895: i-ii) described the roles and relations of the Chinese and European communities in terms which betrayed the jingoism of the British during their imperial heyday:

Though an unbridged chasm does yawn in its midst, waiting for a Marcus Curtius to close it and meanwhile separating the outward social life of Europeans and Chinese, the people of Hong Kong are inwardly bound together by a steadily developing communion of interests and responsibilities: the destiny of the one race is to rule and the fate of the other to be ruled.

The social separation of the Chinese and Europeans was not just the result of language barriers and racial prejudice, but was also a consequence of cultural differences between the two races, which Lethbridge (1978) argues made each community regard the other as both alien and preposterous. The testimony of J.S. Lockhart, a high official and eminent Sinophile, indicates that interactions between Europeans and Chinese in late nineteenth-century Hong Kong were directed towards the prosaic details of business rather than cultural symbiosis of the kind achieved by James Legge and Wang T’ao (Lo, 1966):

... it is not surprising that knowledge of Chinese, their customs and their peculiar requirements should be a sealed book to the British resident, whose intercourse with the Chinese is of the most limited nature, being almost exclusively confined to a discussion of markets, goods, and prices carried on in a jargon called “pidgin” English. (cited in Lethbridge, 1978: 135)

In the early twentieth century, Ireland (1905: 27) reported that ‘intercourse between the mass of the people and those who are administering their affairs is limited almost entirely to brief official interviews’. Ireland also claimed that (with few exceptions) ‘contact with Western civilisation had absolutely failed to change a single trait in the Chinese character’ (ibid.: 30).

As Lockhart’s testimony indicates, such contacts as existed between Chinese and Europeans in nineteenth-century Hong Kong were conducted in pidgin English (see Dennys, 24 April 1880). This ‘strange jargon’ had evolved in Canton in the eighteenth century, and according to Bolton (2000b) was to play an important role in intercultural communication in Hong Kong until well into the twentieth century. In the first number of the *Chinese Repository*, Elijah Bridgman observed that such were the communicative limitations of pidgin English that it generally acted as a barrier rather than as a bridge between the two cultures, and in no small measure contributed to the low esteem in which Chinese and Westerners held each other:

Every visitor at Canton must be struck, not to say confounded, with the strange jargon spoken alike by natives and foreigners, in their mutual intercourse; it has been a most fruitful source of misunderstanding; and not in a few instances, it has paved the way for misrepresentation, altercation, detention, vexation, and other such like evils. (*CR*, May 1832: 1)

A visitor to Hong Kong in the 1870s also observed the ways in which communication between Chinese and Europeans in pidgin English tended to cast both races in an unfavourable light:

Today, for the first time, we have heard ‘pidgin English’ seriously spoken. It is very trying to one’s composure to hear grave merchants, in their counting houses, giving important orders to clerks and compradors in what sounds, until one gets accustomed to it, like the silliest of baby-talk. The term really means ‘business English;’ and certain it is that most Chinamen you meet understand it perfectly, though you might just as well talk Greek as ordinary English. (Brassey, 1879: 365-366)

During the period under consideration, it would appear that only a very small percentage of Hong Kong's Chinese residents were able to speak or write Standard English. Unfortunately, we have little reliable data about the use of English in Hong Kong society in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The first census to include a question about English was in 1931, when only 6.3% of those surveyed claimed to possess some degree of proficiency in the language (Bacon-Shone and Bolton, 1998). It must be assumed that the percentage of English-speaking Chinese was even lower in the nineteenth century. Evidence for this can be found in a speech given by Governor (Sir William) Robinson at Queen's College in 1896. As the following extract reveals, Robinson's address not only provides evidence of the government's disappointment with the results of English-language education at its flagship school, but also offers an interesting insight into the motives which underlay colonial language policy in Hong Kong in the 1890s (which will be fully explored in 6.2):

After an existence of twelve or fifteen years there should be at least 1000 or 1200 boys or men speaking English pretty fluently, knowing something about Western science, something about Great Britain, something outside China. Where are they? In justice to Queen's College, I will say this, that nearly all the English-speaking residents in Hong Kong and certainly those who speak English most fluently, were educated in this College; but their numbers are very few. Does the College therefore exercise any appreciable influence on China? I do not believe that it does. It furnishes, certainly, some clerks to the Hongs [major companies] in the Colony, it provides some for the Customs in China, it provides others for the Hongs in the Coast Ports. But where are the boys or the men who are passing or who have passed through this College, who are imbued, in the least degree, with Anglo-Saxon ideas, who realise the magnitude of the British Empire, the enormous power and strength of England ... (*CM*, 6 February 1896: 3)

Having described the contextual background against which to view language policies and practices in the half century which separated the founding of the Central School (1862) and the enactment of the Education Ordinance (1913), we now need to examine the nature, purposes and consequences of these policies and practices. We commence this

investigation by analysing the factors behind the establishment of the Central School, the major government initiative in English-language education during this period.

4.2 The establishment of the Central School

4.2.1 The Central School and the promotion of English in Hong Kong

In Chapter Two we noted that in most British colonies direct government involvement in English-language education was limited to so-called ‘model’ schools in the principal towns and cities. The government Central School in Hong Kong – subsequently named Victoria College (1889-1894) and Queen’s College (1894-present) – may be regarded as a member of this select group of colonial schools. Since its inception in 1862, the Central School in its various guises has been regarded as Hong Kong’s premier school, and as a major force for the diffusion of Western learning and the English language (Stokes and Stokes, 1987). The (perceived) elite status of its graduates and the (apparent) centrality of its role in cultural interchange may be adduced from the ‘Eton of the East’ sobriquet which became attached to the school during the colonial era (Ingrams, 1952). In her biography of Frederick Stewart, Bickley (1997: 262) assessed the school’s importance in the following terms:

Comparisons of Stewart’s Central School with Eton, and descriptions of it as “one of the best educational institutions in the East”, are inadequate indications of what its stature and significance were. The pupils of the school were valued by leaders among both westerners and Chinese for their role in absorbing and interpreting western knowledge to their countrymen in China and elsewhere.

The role of the Central School in nurturing an English-speaking elite appears to have been especially significant before the First World War. Evidence of its influence during this period can be found in Wright’s (1908) biographical sketches of prominent figures in Hong Kong’s Chinese community, which reveal that most members of the business and professional elite in the early twentieth century had been educated at the Central School.

Further evidence of the school's role in cultivating a class of 'linguistic middlemen' (Luke and Richards, 1982) can be found in Robinson's previously quoted speech at Queen's College in 1896. However, given his frustration at the school's apparent failure to disseminate 'Anglo-Saxon ideas', it is unlikely that Robinson would have regarded comparisons of Queen's College with Eton as anything other than fanciful.

An inevitable consequence of the lofty status and role ascribed to Queen's College is the perception that its nature and mission were the outcome of careful and deliberate planning. In other words, the notion of Queen's as an Oriental Eton conveys the impression that the school was conceived with the express intention of transplanting the character and curriculum of the English public school on to Hong Kong soil. As the colony's premier English school, Queen's was to be the vehicle through which the British would promote their language and culture in China; from its quadrangles and playing fields would emerge a class of persons Chinese in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. While the establishment of the Central School appears to modern eyes suspiciously like a British plot, its progenitors are likely to have viewed its nature and purposes in a somewhat different light; for although its status as the government's flagship school was never in doubt, the Central School was the source of at times bitter controversy for much of the period under review. At the heart of these disputes lay questions of language policy and practice. These included issues and problems that continue to be the subject of study and debate: Who should be taught English and why? What should be the roles of Western and Chinese learning in the curriculum? Should English or Cantonese be the medium for imparting Western knowledge? Was English best acquired through its use as a medium of instruction for content subjects or as a language subject? An important task in this chapter will be to examine how Frederick Stewart grappled with these questions

during the school's formative years. Before we turn to these issues, however, we need to analyse the content of Legge's scheme to establish the Central School, and particularly his motives in putting it forward.

4.2.2 Legge's scheme

Given that the Central School was the most significant government initiative in English-language education before the founding of Hong Kong University (1911), and particularly given its elevated status and role in the school system throughout the colonial era, a fundamental question necessarily suggests itself: Why was the Central School established? As we noted in 3.4.3, the idea of founding the school originated with the Scottish scholar-missionary, James Legge, who had been an influential figure in Hong Kong education since the early 1840s. Legge introduced his scheme at the 3 July 1860 meeting of the Board of Education, which some months earlier had superseded the Education Committee as the body responsible for supervising the government schools. He was then invited to submit his proposal in writing, which he duly did in the form of a minute to Board members on 11 July. After receiving the Board's unanimous backing (6 September), Legge's plan was forwarded to the Governor, Sir Hercules Robinson, who gave his assent on 9 January 1861, and then to the Legislative Council, which authorised the purchase of premises for the new school on 23 March (Eitel, 1890-91). It was only at this point that the colonial government took steps to inform Whitehall of its intentions, in the shape of a despatch from Robinson to Lord Newcastle, the Secretary of State. In his reply (10 June), Newcastle indicated that the Treasury had approved the purchase of the school building, but upbraided the colonial authorities for failing to provide detailed information about the scheme, particularly in relation to the 'class of children' who attended the five schools that would coalesce into the

new institution, 'the general character of the masters', 'the nature of the education given', and (perhaps significantly) the 'present and future expenses of the school' (CO 129/80: 386), questions which reveal Whitehall's general ignorance of educational development in the colony. These questions were answered – evidently to Newcastle's satisfaction – in a despatch (23 July) from Hong Kong's Colonial Secretary, W.T. Mercer, who reported that 'In the principal schools English is taught, both reading from book, and elocution, and writing' (ibid.: 522). The evidence suggests, however, that the Hong Kong authorities pressed ahead with the implementation of the plan without the metropolitan government's knowledge or approval, for on 10 April the Board sent a letter to the Registrar of London University requesting his assistance in the recruitment of a suitable candidate for the post of Headmaster/Inspector. A similar letter was sent to the Principals of Edinburgh and Aberdeen Universities.

The point here is that the impetus for this important initiative came from an interested private individual rather than from an official in Hong Kong, or a politician or bureaucrat in London. Who then was James Legge, and how does a knowledge of his life and work help us to understand his motives in proposing the Central School project? This is no place for a biography (see Ride, 1960); it may, however, be instructive to compare Legge's knowledge of and attitude towards Oriental learning with those of a rather more famous policy-maker, T.B. Macaulay. As we noted in 2.1.4, Macaulay composed his Minute soon arriving in India; his experience of native education and society was therefore very limited. Macaulay's knowledge of the East contrasts sharply with that of Legge, who when devising his plan for the Central School was able to draw on twenty years' experience of bilingual education in Chinese contexts. The source of the Minute's continuing notoriety lies in Macaulay's disdainful attack on Indian learning, particularly his contention that a

single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. Macaulay's contempt for Oriental education stands in marked contrast to Legge's profound understanding and appreciation of Chinese language and culture; for Legge was a Sinologue of world renown: the first man to perform the monumental task of translating the Chinese Classics into English; the first recipient of the prestigious Julien Prize for Chinese literature; the first Professor of Chinese at Oxford (1875-1897) (Pfister, 1990). In formulating a language policy for Hong Kong, Legge was not the kind of man who would instinctively wish to 'slam the door on indigenous traditions of learning'.

As might be expected, Legge's submission to the Board of Education differed markedly in style and tone from Macaulay's Minute to Bentinck twenty-five years earlier. Legge's minute was plainly written and to the point, and thus reflected his essentially practical purpose: to improve the quality of language education in the government schools through the institution of a more efficient system of management. To this end, he put forward three proposals:

First – That there be erected a building in Victoria, in which the Schools now maintained in T'ae-ping-shan, the upper and central Bazaars, Webster's Crescent, and near the Mosque, shall be concentrated in different rooms.
Second – That in connection with this building there be provided residence for a European Master, who shall form and conduct English Classes; and that only in the Schools concentrated there shall English be taught.
Third – That this European Master, aided by a Board of Education, constituted like the present, or modified as circumstances may render desirable, exercise a Superintendence over the other Schools in Aberdeen and the villages over the Island. (*HKBB*, 1860: 222)

Although Legge observed that his plan gave greater prominence to English teaching than had hitherto been the case, it hardly constituted a blueprint for an English public school. The wording of the first proposal is revealing as it suggests that Legge did not necessarily envisage the creation of a new unified institution which henceforth would be known as 'the Central School'. It appears that Legge conceived the central institution simply as a building

where five existing schools would congregate ‘in different rooms’. In this respect it is interesting that in its early years the new institution was sometimes known as ‘the central government schools’, as may be seen from a report about the ‘schools’ in the *HKDP* on 30 January 1869. The other significant feature of the first recommendation is that the new institution would be located ‘in Victoria’, the colony’s commercial and administrative hub.

Legge’s second proposal, which relates to language policy, is interesting chiefly for what he omits to mention. For example, Legge does not specify how many pupils would be taught English, how much instruction they would receive (*vis-à-vis* Chinese), or whether the language would be taught as a subject or as a medium of instruction for Western subjects. Legge’s thinking on these questions is illuminated to some extent by the Board’s letter to London University, which explained that students attending the ‘Central Institution’ would be ‘taught their own language and the rudiments of English as hitherto’ (CO 129/82: 583). This suggests that the role of English in the new school would not differ greatly from that found in some of the existing government schools, where (as we have seen) elementary instruction in English had been ‘engrafted’ on to the Confucian curriculum in the late 1850s. In its letter, the Board also pointed out that ‘from the pupils who were taught English’ the Headmaster would form classes ‘to receive a thorough English training from himself’ (*ibid.*: 583). The implication here is that some students would not be allowed or required to learn English. This interpretation accords with the testimony of Stewart, who claimed that the ‘original intention of the Board was to make the Central School a kind of model Chinese school, in connexion with which classes composed of the more intelligent of the boys were to be taught English’ (*HKBB*, 1868: 289).

The evidence therefore suggests that, far from being the blueprint for an Oriental Eton, Legge’s scheme envisaged the creation of a Chinese elementary school where the

focus of teaching and learning would be the Confucian classics. To this core curriculum of Chinese subjects would be added instruction in English by a British master. The new institution would be the only public school offering (optional) teaching in English; the content, medium and methods of education in the other government schools would be strictly Chinese. Although Legge's plan accorded English a more prominent role in the public education system, it did not necessarily envisage a substantial increase in provision, for at the time of its composition English was being taught (imperfectly it was claimed) in eight government schools in Victoria (see 3.4.3). Rather, in formulating his Central School project, Legge appears to have been motivated primarily by a desire to improve the quality of English-language education in the public sector, although (as shall see) this was not the only consideration.

4.2.3 Legge's motives

In a speech at the Central School in 1873, Legge reportedly told the assembled masters and boys that although he had personally been 'greatly instrumental' in founding the school, he had 'no doubt' that it would have become established without his initiative 'as it was the legitimate outcome of the present course of government' (*CM*, 21 January 1873: 3). It is also interesting that in his City Hall lecture the following year, Legge (1874: 188) pointed out that he had 'pressed on successive governors' the ideas which eventually were to be 'heartily' adopted by Governor Robinson. When considering the nature and purposes of Legge's scheme, we therefore need to bear in mind that his views on language policy were neither new nor unique.

It appears that Legge's main motive in proposing his scheme was to enhance the quality of English teaching and learning in the government schools. In his minute, Legge

claimed that the unsatisfactory state of English-language education stemmed from the fact that the teachers were ‘young men whose own knowledge of our language is only rudimentary’ (*HKBB*, 1860: 222). Legge argued that if his plan were implemented ‘the English education carried on under the Master’s eye would be more efficient than it is now’ (*ibid.*: 222). Legge’s perception of the problem is corroborated by the Board’s 1860 report, which noted that government English teachers needed the ‘counsel’ and ‘countenance’ of an Inspector (*ibid.*: 221), and, perhaps more revealingly, by the testimony of Stewart, who, reflecting on his first day at the Central School, recalled finding himself ‘among a crowd of nearly three hundred boys, who could not speak English to me, and, to whom I could not speak Chinese. Two Chinese assistant-masters were present, but they had almost forgotten any English they ever knew, and I could scarcely make myself intelligible to them’ (*HKBB*, 1868: 289).

While pedagogical considerations appear to have been uppermost in Legge’s thinking, there is evidence that his plan was also motivated by a desire to promote British interests in Hong Kong and China. In his minute, Legge sought to justify his Central School project in the following terms:

This plan makes the teaching of English a more prominent part of the education in the Government Schools than it has hitherto been. But I beg to submit to you that it ought to be so. It ought to be so in this Colony, where the administration of Justice is conducted in the English language, and according to English law. It ought to be so, that an influence may go forth from this island, which shall be widely felt in China, enlightening and benefiting many of its people. (*HKBB*, 1860: 222)

Legge’s first argument is significant as it provides a further instance of the way in which the adoption of English as the official language influenced its study in the schools. As discussed in 2.4, the use of English in the administrative and legal domains was an important factor behind the demand for English-language education in the Empire. What is significant about

Legge's minute, however, is that he provides little evidence of a demand for English in consequence of its official status. While it is true that one of Legge's grounds for recruiting a European master was his belief that 'many young Chinese ... would be found to enter his English classes' (ibid.: 222), this does not necessarily imply the existence of a strong demand for the language. In fact, it could be interpreted to mean that the school would take the initiative in 'finding' students for its English classes, a practice which the mission schools, including Legge's Anglo-Chinese College, had engaged in since the 1840s (Smith, 1965). This reading certainly accords with evidence provided by Stewart's successor, Bateson Wright, who in a brief history of Queen's College claimed that in its early years boys 'actually required to be enticed to undertake the study of English' (*Yellow Dragon*, June 1920: 204). Stewart's 1871 education report also indicates that, far from being greeted with widespread enthusiasm, the opening of the Central School was viewed with suspicion by the colony's Chinese community:

The school has firmly established itself as one of the permanent institutions of the Colony; and the Chinese, both here and in the adjoining province, regard it with increasing confidence. They now seem to understand its aim and purpose. They do not find in it an attempt to exercise some sinister influence, either religious or political, or both, as was at first more than half suspected. (*HKGG*, 2 March 1872: 99)

This evidence raises the possibility that in formulating his plan Legge was in fact seeking to create a demand for English-language education rather than attempting to satiate a pre-existing need or interest.

Legge also justified his scheme by pointing to the beneficent influence which the school was likely to exert on China, an objective that was reaffirmed in the Board's letter to London University: 'Under the right man the Institution will not only benefit the Chinese population of this Colony, but tell powerfully on the enlightenment and progress of the adjoining continent' (CO 129/82: 583). Colonial Office records indicate that this wider

political aim had been in Legge's mind for some years. In 1846, he had argued that the establishment of 'a large Free School' modelled on those in Penang and Singapore would serve British political and economic interests in China:

It would be a noble undertaking for the British Gov't to found in Hong Kong an Institution from which the light of Science would shine into the Empire of China. The Expenditure would be more than repaid by the services of well trained and capable Native Interpreters, Clerks, etc, while the impression made upon the Chinese – an impression that would gradually increase & extend – with regard to the English Nation & character, would be of the most favourable nature, & prove productive of very beneficial results to both Countries. (CO 129/18: 305-307)

Legge's views on the desirability of conciliating the Chinese might be compared to those in the Education Committee's 1853 report, which had advocated the study of English as a means of forging a 'bond of union' between the colony's Chinese and European communities (see 3.4.3). When considering Legge's motives in reviving conciliation as a policy objective, it should be noted that his minute was written in the aftermath of the second Opium War (during which the British had destroyed the Summer Palace in Peking). In Hong Kong, one manifestation of the hostility in Anglo-Chinese relations during this period was the attempted mass poisoning of the European community by a Chinese baker (Legge, 1874). From the colonial regime's perspective, there were sound reasons for a policy of conciliation at this time.

Although the wording of Legge's minute suggests that he was motivated by a mixture of pedagogical and political considerations (with the former apparently predominating), there is evidence that his plan to recruit a European Headmaster/Inspector was also inspired by a desire 'to deliver the Government Schools from the bondage of St Paul's College and its Bishop' (George Smith) (Eitel, 1890-91: 341). This objective is not of course stated in his minute, although Legge's first argument in support of his plan – that 'the Government would have an officer, himself actively engaged in the work of education'

(*HKBB*, 1860: 222) – indicated his wish to see a civil servant rather than a cleric at the helm of public education. It must be assumed that Legge regarded the appointment of a layman as the key to instituting a secular policy in the government schools. It might be objected here that Legge was himself a prominent missionary: Why would he wish to rid public education of clerical influence? The main reason, it appears, was Legge's frustration at the failure of the Anglo-Chinese mission schools to achieve their religious and educational objectives. As discussed in 3.3.5, most students attended these schools in order to pick up a smattering of English; they evinced little interest in the spiritual or intellectual enlightenment the missionaries sought to offer, the Bible and other Western books being viewed simply as the means to learn English. Legge's recognition of the problems which stemmed from the conflicting motivations of students and missionaries was the main reason for his decision to close the Anglo-Chinese College in 1856 (Smith, 1965). More importantly, however, the disappointing linguistic and educational results of mission-school education convinced him of the need to remove religious teaching from the government schools, thereby leaving them to concentrate on traditional Chinese subjects and (in the Central School) elementary ELT. Legge's ultimate objective was therefore to improve the efficiency of language education by removing an area of study that he judged to be unwanted and irrelevant. To effect this reform, Legge – with Robinson's support – engineered the resignation of the Inspector of Schools (Rev. Lobscheid) and emasculated the Bishop's influence on the Board (Ng Lun, 1984a). Eitel (1890-91: 341) claims that Legge's 'force of character' and 'superiority of scholastic knowledge' enabled him to rule the Board with the 'ease and grace of a born Bishop'. The Scotsman's ascendancy is evident from the fact that Smith's nominee for the Headmastership/Inspectorship, Rev. Cooper, was rejected because 'the Board were unanimously of the opinion that it should be filled by a layman' (CO 129/81: 211), while

the man eventually selected for the post, Frederick Stewart, had – like Legge – studied with distinction at Aberdeen Grammar School and King’s College, Aberdeen.

Legge’s scheme therefore appears to have been motivated by a mixture of pedagogical, political and religious considerations, although it would seem that the essentially practical aim of improving the quality of English-language education was uppermost in his mind when he presented his ideas to the Board in July 1860. Although Legge’s plan had been gestating for some years, it was still a blueprint, and – to modern eyes – a rather sketchy one. As the next section reveals, it was Frederick Stewart’s historical role to turn this vague blueprint into a fully formed public education system.

4.3 Language policy and practice at the Central School

4.3.1 Frederick Stewart (1836-1889)

Stewart graduated from King’s College in 1859 (top of his class in Intellectual and Moral Sciences), and then entered Divinity Hall in Aberdeen with a view to becoming a Minister. At the end of his second year of theological studies, Stewart took a holiday job at Stubbington House School in Hampshire. It was here, in August 1861, that his interest was aroused by an advertisement in *The Scotsman* for the post of Headmaster/Inspector in Hong Kong, a situation which (he claimed) offered ‘a peculiarly interesting sphere of usefulness’ (CO 129/82: 585). Aided by a glowing reference from the Principal of Aberdeen University, Stewart’s application was accepted by the Board, and on 20 December 1861 he set sail for Hong Kong. Stewart arrived in the colony on 15 February 1862, and three weeks later commenced his duties at the Central School (Bickley, 1997).

Stewart performed the roles of Headmaster/Inspector until 1878, when the German missionary, E.J. Eitel, assumed the Inspectorship (initially in an acting capacity while

Stewart was on leave). Stewart resigned from his post at the Central School in 1881, being replaced by another Legge nominee, Bateson Wright. After leaving the education sector, Stewart occupied several senior positions in the colonial administration, including on several occasions that of Acting Governor. Stewart's death in 1889 provoked an unprecedented outpouring of grief, the *China Mail* (30 September 1889: 2) commenting that 'no previous blow' had ever 'so shaken the residents of Hong Kong'. Remorse at Stewart's passing was especially acute among the Chinese, who (the paper observed) regarded him 'with a kind of reverence, as one who came nearest to their high-class men whose merits are recorded in their classical annals'. According to Wright, Stewart exerted a deep and lasting influence on a generation of students, for whom their teacher's name continued to act as a 'spell' and a 'watchword' years after his death (*YD*, June 1920: 295). Despite the high esteem in which he was held, Stewart's educational career was dogged by seemingly interminable problems and controversies, a significant number of which, as we shall see, concerned questions of language policy and practice.

4.3.2 The place of the Central School in the colonial education system

Figure 1 provides an overview of the structure of colonial schooling in Hong Kong during the Stewart era. During this period, 'colonial schools' (i.e. those founded by non-native agencies) fell into two categories: those operated by the government and those run by various missionary societies. In terms of language policy, schools in the public sector were either purely Chinese-medium or – in the case of the Central School – Anglo-Chinese. Schools in the mission sector fell into four broad categories: Chinese, Anglo-Chinese, English and Portuguese. Schools classified as 'English' were established primarily for Europeans and Eurasians. It would appear, however, that schools providing an 'English

education' were often attended by Chinese children, a case in point being St Andrew's School, which several months before its closure had 81 Chinese pupils on its books (as opposed to six English students) (*CM*, 17 April 1862: 62). The demise of St Andrew's in late 1862 stemmed largely from its being superseded by the Central School, whose Anglo-Chinese curriculum was intended for non-native speakers of English (*CM*, 6 November 1862: 178). St Andrew's, however, was not the only casualty of the apparently more 'relevant' Central School: St Paul's College also closed its doors in 1867 for broadly similar reasons (*CM*, 8 February 1868: 4).

Figure 1 The structure of colonial schooling in Hong Kong (1860s-1870s).

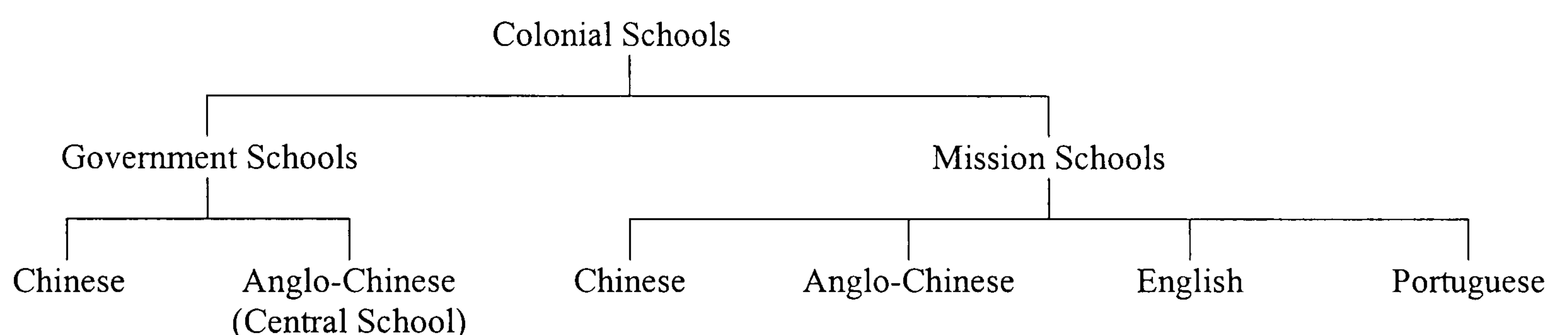


Table 3 summarises language-based enrolments in Hong Kong's government and mission schools between 1855 and 1875. These figures indicate that the colonial regime was the main provider of vernacular education during this period. Although its status as the government flagship ensured that the Central School tended to be the focus of attention and funding, this should not disguise the fact that during the Stewart era most students in the public sector attended Chinese-medium schools.

Table 3 Enrolments in colonial schools by stream (1855-1875).

Year	Government		Mission			
	Chinese	Anglo-Chinese	Chinese	Anglo-Chinese	English	Portuguese
1855	155	0*	0	129	45	28
1860	948	0*	156	77	117	67
1865	390	207	246	83	171	NA
1870	782	337	294	60	128	45
1875	1,016	556	153	NA	347	NA

Collated from the *HKBB* (1855-1875). NA = Not available. * Some students were receiving rudimentary instruction in English in the government vernacular schools during this period (see 3.4.3).

In his report for 1870, Stewart described the government vernacular schools as ‘Chinese schools, pure and simple. Chinese books alone are used and the mode of instruction is such as would be found in any native village school in China’ (*HKBB*, 1870: 299). Although Stewart was a consistent advocate of mother-tongue education, he was far from satisfied with the content or methods of instruction in the native schools. In his first annual report, Stewart argued that ‘the Chinese have no *education* in the real sense of the word’:

No attempt is made at a simultaneous development of the mental powers. These are all sacrificed to the cultivation of memory. The boy who can repeat correctly the writings of Confucius and Mencius is considered a great scholar although he may be as ignorant of their meaning as if they were written in a language of which he did not know the alphabet. (*HKBB*, 1865: 279)

In his next report, Stewart observed that although Chinese education was ‘very barren of what we consider as the necessary elements of any education that is worth the name’, it was nevertheless ‘founded on principles which are strictly moral, which have reference to all relations of life, and which have sustained, from centuries before Europe was civilized to the present day, the whole fabric of Chinese polity and manners’ (*HKBB*, 1866: 280).

Stewart's recognition of the centrality of the Confucian canon in Chinese life partly explains his reluctance to replace the traditional curriculum with Western subjects. Another factor was his awareness of the 'undisguised contempt' with which most Chinese viewed English school books (*HKBB*, 1867: 291). This general disdain for European learning did not of course prevent some Chinese boys from attending the Central School; but, as Stewart observed, they were motivated by the desire to acquire the language rather than the content of an English education since English was 'convertible into *dollars*' (*HKBB*, 1865: 280). In fact, there is evidence to suggest that the Chinese preferred to learn English from native teachers rather than attend the Central School (and other Western institutions), as may be gathered from Father Raimondi's remarks at St Saviour's School's speech day in 1869:

For one who has not dealt much with people of the East it is impossible to understand the antagonism and the antipathy which they bear towards Europeans. They make very little of our Schools because we are European. They will not learn English because it is the language of the European. Instead of attending excellent Schools directed by the best European teachers, they prefer to learn English from Chinese teachers. (*CM*, 22 March 1869: 3)

Raimondi's views, which were endorsed by Governor MacDonnell (1866-1872) on the same occasion (*HKDP*, 22 March 1869), provide further evidence that the demand for English-language education was not especially strong during the early decades of colonial rule.

During his Inspectorship, Stewart made only one attempt to introduce English teaching in the government vernacular schools. This was an experiment in the early 1870s in Aberdeen, a fishing village on the Island's southern coast. Although the scheme was initially quite successful, after around six months enrolments began to decline and the master, a Central School graduate, resigned 'in despair'. Stewart's account of the school's demise revealed his conviction that the study of English was an intrinsically valuable process, a view which – unsurprisingly – was not shared by the villagers:

The reason given for withdrawing the boys was that, as they had failed to learn to *speak* English in six months, there was no hope of their ever being able to do so. It was thus the immediate prospect of turning a knowledge of English to practical account that induced the parents to send their children. Mere mental improvement was an element in the calculation which it never occurred to them to include. (HKGG, 7 March 1874: 105)

Stewart suggested that one possible explanation for the failure of ELT in Aberdeen was that ‘the locality was a bad one for the experiment’ (HKGG, 27 February 1875: 60). In hindsight, this appears to have been crucial, for, as we have seen, there was little demand for English teaching outside the centres of business and administration. The failure of his Aberdeen initiative presumably confirmed in Stewart’s mind the wisdom of Legge’s recommendation that government-sponsored ELT be confined to the Central School.

It is important to note that the Central School was a boys’ school. Although girls attended the government schools in steadily increasing numbers during the 1860s and 1870s, Stewart ensured that they received no instruction in English since experience had shown that Chinese girls invariably put their knowledge of the language to use in brothels with mainly European clienteles. In his reports, Stewart was understandably reluctant to elaborate on the reasons for his Chinese-only policy in the girls’ schools:

It is unnecessary, I trust, for me to state that English is carefully excluded from these schools. To the melancholy results which, in nearly every instance, have followed from teaching Chinese girls English I need not more particularly allude. Its effect on the character of the boys is not, I am sorry to find, what one could wish, but on the girls it has proved to be fatal. (HKBB, 1867: 292)

Some years later, when reporting on the mission-run Baxter Vernacular Girls’ Schools, Stewart observed that ‘the educating of Chinese girls in English has been one of the most disastrous experiments which the Colony has ever witnessed’ (HKGG, 7 March 1874: 106). As we shall see, it was not until the 1890s that the government relaxed its strict language policy in relation to female education.

The data in Table 3 indicate that the mission schools were not especially popular during the Stewart era. It is important to note that at this time the mission schools were essentially private schools in that they received no financial support from the government. In fact, it was only in 1873, when Stewart introduced his grant-in-aid scheme, that the mission schools became eligible for government assistance. Stewart's scheme, which was influenced by the Forster Act in Britain (1870), was initially unsuccessful as many societies refused to enter the scheme since they objected to its stipulation that four consecutive hours of each school day be devoted to secular teaching (Ng Lun, 1984a). As we shall see in Chapter Five, disputes about the scheme's religious provisions spilled over into the sphere of language policy and practice, the Catholic missions using the unsatisfactory English-language attainments of Stewart's Central School students as a means of attacking his secular education policy. It was only when the 'religious question' had been resolved, through the Revised Code of 1879, that the mission schools accepted grant-in-aid status. As we shall see in Chapter Six, this was to have a major impact on the nature and extent of educational provision in the colony.

Having described the place of the Central School in the colonial education system, we now need to examine Stewart's policies and practices as Headmaster, particularly in relation to the roles he assigned to the English and Chinese languages in the curriculum.

4.3.3 The development of an Anglo-Chinese curriculum

As we have seen, Legge's original intention was that the Central School should be a 'model Chinese school' in which all pupils would be required to study a core curriculum of Chinese subjects. Under this plan, instruction in English was to be optional. It was on this basis that Legge and another Board member, J.J. Mackenzie (a prominent merchant), had organised the new school prior to its formal opening by Stewart on 10 March 1862. However, since the initial intake was unmanageably large, it quickly became apparent that Legge's scheme was impracticable. Consequently, the Board was forced to re-consider the roles of the two languages in the curriculum, and particularly the principles on which pupils would be admitted (Eitel, 1890-91). These questions were resolved by Mackenzie, who in a memorandum to the Board (3 June 1862) proposed that only those boys who were to be taught both English and Chinese should be allowed to enter the school.

As Stewart pointed out (*HKBB*, 1868: 290), Mackenzie's plan entailed a 'radical change' to the school's constitution as it made English a compulsory subject rather than an option taken by 'the more intelligent of the boys' (*ibid.*: 289). Since the new policy excluded elementary Chinese studies from the curriculum, prospective students were required to pass an entrance examination in Chinese to demonstrate that they possessed the requisite first-language proficiency. According to Stewart, the standard of Chinese among applicants was 'so low that many more had to be rejected than could be admitted, and many of those who did pass were unwilling to remain unless they were taught English at once' (*HKBB*, 1865: 277). Boys who passed the examination were admitted to the Preparatory Class, which provided a year's instruction in Chinese subjects. Those who successfully completed their first year entered the 'English School', which was divided into two Sections – Upper and Lower – each lasting three years. The term 'English School' is

somewhat misleading since it conveys the impression that the six-year course focused exclusively on English-language education. In fact, it would be more accurate to describe the curriculum as ‘Anglo-Chinese’, for, as Stewart was always keen to stress, his policy at the Central School was to place English and Chinese ‘on a footing of perfect equality’ and ‘not to sacrifice the one to the other’ (*HKGG*, 5 February 1876: 78). To this end, students in the ‘English School’ throughout Stewart’s Headmastership devoted ‘four hours a day to English and four to Chinese’ (*HKBB*, 1865: 277).

Although Stewart recognised that there were ‘grave doubts in the minds of many as to the propriety or necessity of devoting the half of the boys’ time to the study of their own language’ (*HKBB*, 1866: 280), he always sought to resist pressure – not least from his own students – to diminish the role of Chinese studies in the curriculum. This was partly because, as an educationalist, he believed it a matter of principle that his students should possess a firm grounding in their own language and culture, and partly because, as an English teacher, he believed that proficiency in their mother tongue was a necessary basis for the acquisition of a foreign language:

I hold it to be an axiom that a boy cannot be taught a foreign language without a knowledge of his own, unless, indeed, he is sent to the country where the language is spoken ... Chinese is not studied at the Central School so much for the sake of making the boys acquainted with *what* their sages have written as that they may master as far as possible the language *as* a language, in the investigation of its elements, and in the construction of its parts. (*ibid.*: 280)

Stewart thus valued the Chinese classics chiefly for the scope they offered for *language* teaching and learning. It would appear, however, that Stewart’s pedagogical concerns were not shared by native teachers, parents and students, for whom education was essentially a matter of memorising the Chinese classics. In other words, the *content* was paramount (even if this was not always fully understood). However, when we examine the

aims of Stewart and Chinese students/parents in relation to English-language education, it is interesting that their respective positions on the issues of content and language are reversed: for Stewart, the content – and particularly the intellectual process by which this content was learned – was of central importance; for the Chinese, however, the language of an English education was all that most required.

4.3.4 The teaching and learning of English

Although Legge's plan accorded English greater prominence in government education, it provided few details about what was to be the content of teaching and learning. In particular, it failed to specify whether English was to be 'acquired' through its use as the medium of instruction in Western subjects, or 'learned' as a language subject, or whether the English curriculum was to be a combination of what today would be termed English-medium instruction (EMI) and English language teaching (ELT). These questions were left to the new Headmaster to resolve.

When considering Stewart's policies and practices in relation to the teaching of English, it is worth noting that when he commenced his duties at the Central School he was twenty-six years old, possessed no teaching qualifications, and had only a few months' experience in an English boarding school. In determining the content and methods of English-language education at the Central School, Stewart was not therefore able to draw on a vast fund of theoretical knowledge about or practical experience in the teaching of English to non-native speakers (although as a successful student of Latin and Greek he undoubtedly appreciated the special demands of mastering a foreign language). In this respect, Stewart's background was perhaps no different from that of other nineteenth-century colonial educators (see 2.1.9). Given his relative inexperience, it is not surprising that in deciding the

subject matter of the school's English curriculum, Stewart initially turned to the books that he himself had used when a pupil at Rathen Parish School (Bickley, 1997).

The need for something reassuringly familiar was especially pressing given the 'hopeless chaos' that characterised Stewart's first few weeks at the new school (*HKGG*, 2 March 1872: 98). As he subsequently recalled, 86 of the 141 students originally assigned to learn English 'had to begin with the alphabet', while his two Chinese assistants 'should have been *in* rather than *over* a class' (*ibid.*: 98). The Board appears to have made little effort to prepare for the school's opening, for when Stewart arrived 'Only one reading book, a very elementary one, could be found in the Colony, and this had to be used in all the classes till school materials could be obtained from England' (*ibid.*: 98). These were readers prepared by the Commissioners for National Education in Ireland. As he noted in his report for 1865, the Irish books were ill-adapted to the needs of Chinese students:

Complaints are not unfrequently made at home against the series, and graver objections might be made to their suitability for the Chinese; but, with all their faults, it would entail the necessity of compiling a series for the special use of the School. The modes of life and the forms of thought in the West are so different from those that prevail in the East that a lesson which would be simplicity itself to a class of English children is beset with numberless difficulties to a class of Chinese – difficulties, too, which tax all the powers of the teacher to obviate or explain. (*HKBB*, 1865: 277)

Stewart's observations about the linguistic and cultural unsuitability of the Irish series might be compared with those of Samuel Brown in his 1843 report on the MES School (see 3.3.3). In attempting to impart an 'English education' to Chinese students, both Headmasters rapidly found that books intended for English-speaking children were wholly inappropriate for pupils in the initial stages of learning English as a foreign language (and, in this respect, it should be noted that for most students in Hong Kong, English has always been a *foreign* rather than a *second* language).

Given the problems which accompanied the Central School's opening, it is not surprising that English studies during the early years of Stewart's Headmastership were of a rudimentary nature. In 1865, Stewart reported that instruction was 'still of an elementary character', nothing having been attempted beyond 'the most common branches of an English education as taught in the National Schools at home' (*HKBB*, 1865: 277). Over the next decade, the scope and standard of the school's English curriculum were gradually extended beyond its original core of the 3Rs. In 1875, the top class were examined in Algebra, Arithmetic, Chemistry, Composition, Dictation, Drawing, Geography, Geometry, Grammar, Mensuration and Translation (English into Chinese and vice versa) (*HKGG*, 12 February 1876: 84-86).

While Stewart was apparently the driving force behind these developments, government records indicate that the introduction of Science stemmed largely from Governor MacDonnell's influence. Stewart, whose understanding of his students' linguistic needs and capabilities far exceeded that of the Governor, appears to have viewed this initiative with a degree of scepticism:

Considerable difficulty must attend the communication of a knowledge of these subjects through the medium of a language in which the scholars are but in their first stages of advancement, and for the ordinary nomenclature of which there exist, as yet, no equivalents in Chinese. To this must be added the fact that ... the boys leave school by far too early for acquiring a taste for such studies. (*HKBB*, 1866: 280)

Notwithstanding Stewart's doubts, MacDonnell wrote to the Colonial Office in February 1867 requesting materials for 'elementary experiments in Chemistry and Electricity'. The Governor observed that these were

branches of knowledge quite unfamiliar to the Chinese, who as your Lordship is aware are still confined to studies within the abstract writings of their ancient sages, deriving from thence little more knowledge applicable to the present external world than the youth of England would derive from the exclusive study of the proverbs of Solomon. (CO 129/120: 422)

MacDonnell expressed the hope that the introduction of Western science would ‘awaken a spirit of useful inquiry hitherto kept down by the stultifying and narrow disciplines’ of traditional Chinese education (ibid.: 423). However, in outlining his plans for the Central School, MacDonnell was careful to stress that his administration was ‘not in a position to undertake anything of a very costly character’ (ibid.: 424). Nevertheless, he trusted that the colony’s Chinese community would remember that ‘what had been done was a disinterested effort on the part of the government for the benefit of what was a foreign race although under a British flag’ (ibid.: 431). MacDonnell’s views on Britain’s motives in promoting English education in Hong Kong might be compared with those of the Chief Justice, Sir John Smale, who in a speech at the Central School in 1873 claimed that ‘In every clime, and in almost every latitude, England was doing for the native subjects what it was doing here. It was from love of these races and for their advantage that such buildings were raised and such schools established’ (*CM*, 21 January 1873: 3).

It appears that Chemistry was formally introduced into the curriculum in 1869. Stewart’s account of his teaching method indicates that English was the sole medium of spoken and written communication in the new subject:

No text-book has yet been used and it is a doubtful point whether one should be used, because the oral instruction given both ensures attention on the part of the class and is also a test of their knowledge of English, the only language which is spoken ... On Saturday, a lesson is given with experiments. On Monday, the boys bring in English an account of what they have heard and seen, – an exercise which serves the double purpose of fixing the lesson on their minds and of practising them in composition. (*HKBB*, 1870: 300)

It may be the case that Stewart’s English-only policy in Chemistry was prompted by the absence of a textbook. In other content subjects, where books intended for English children were used, there is evidence that Stewart and his colleagues (including E.J.R. Willcocks and

Alexander Falconer who joined the staff in 1864 and 1869 respectively) made considerable use of Cantonese to present and explain English-language teaching materials.

The most revealing evidence of mixed-mode instruction at Stewart's Central School appears in his report for 1869. Stewart's observations below were prompted by MacDonnell's decision in 1866 to open the school to non-Chinese boys. Although Stewart apparently supported the initiative, he was not prepared to institute a policy of linguistic apartheid at the school: if (say) a British boy wished to attend the school, he would have to join a class comprising mainly Chinese pupils. Since Chinese was the usual medium of instruction and interaction, he would have to become proficient in the language if he was to make any progress in his studies:

For a boy to come to the school and not to learn Chinese, it is simply a waste of time. There must be some common language as a medium of intercommunication between the teacher and his class. Nine-tenths of the class are, and will be, Chinese. Translation from English into Chinese and from Chinese into English must therefore be the ground-work of the instruction, and, in the lower classes especially, the principal part of it. The mere reading of an English book will not, without a great waste of time, give the reader a knowledge of the language. The sooner he understands what he reads the better for his progress. For this reason, it is indispensable that every boy at the Central School should learn Chinese. Even an English boy, who understands what he reads, loses a great deal of time. When translation is the work of the class he must sit idle unless he knows Chinese. (*HKBB*, 1869: 312)

As in the modern era (see 1.2.4), the adoption of mixed-mode teaching by Stewart and his colleagues was an inevitable and necessary response to a fundamental problem, namely that most students at the Central School in the late nineteenth century – like their counterparts in the Anglo-Chinese stream a century later – had not attained the requisite cognitive and linguistic threshold levels to enable them to benefit from a genuine immersion programme (Swain, 1986; Swain and Johnson, 1997).

We have already noted that Stewart's pupils were interested in the language rather than the content of an English education. As MacDonnell observed in his despatch of February 1867, students attended the Central School 'almost solely with a view to the profit which they can hereafter make out of the limited knowledge of English there acquired' (CO 129/120: 423). In modern terms, they wanted ELT rather than EMI (which in any case was not strictly *English* medium instruction given the apparent prevalence of code mixing and switching in the classroom). In a sense, the English curriculum did cater for this desire, for, as we have seen, it included language-oriented subjects such as Composition, Dictation, Grammar and Translation in addition to content-oriented subjects such as Geography and Algebra, which, according to Stewart, were 'gone through mechanically, under a sort of protest' (HKBB, 1868: 287). It may be the case, however, that Stewart's approach to the teaching of English as a language did not always accord with the needs of a class of youth, who, in MacDonnell's view, were 'innately greedy after anything capable of placing them in a lucrative position' (CO 129/130: 4). For the most part, Stewart's students wanted to acquire – as rapidly as possible – a rudimentary command of English for business purposes. As an educationalist rather than a mere English language teacher, Stewart was having none of that. In a letter to Whitehall in 1878, Stewart acknowledged that there were schools in Hong Kong where boys were taught 'colloquial English by rote from a phrase-book' (CO 129/183: 363). Stewart, however, believed that he had 'a higher duty to discharge', and was therefore 'averse to mere parrot work' (ibid.: 364). In line with his fundamental aim of imparting a 'sound education', Stewart's teaching focused on securing for his students a firm grounding in English grammar. In Stewart's view, the acquisition of a sound understanding of grammar was a necessary basis for the development of effective oral communication skills in English:

The boys have no possible opportunity of speaking English except to their teachers at school. It cannot, therefore, be expected that immediately on leaving school they could be very proficient in it. Practice alone can give facility, and I always find that when the boys who have got situations come back to see me, as they invariably do when they return to the Colony should they be employed elsewhere, they speak English with considerable fluency. At school, they have laid a foundation in a grammatical knowledge of the language, and, when they come into close contact with foreigners, *speaking* is rapidly acquired. (*HKBB*, 1868: 287)

As intimated above, it is likely that many students at the Central School would have preferred the ‘quick fix’ approach to oral fluency that Stewart so abhorred. As he observed in 1872, ‘many of the Chinese think that the acquirement of English, or of any other barbarian language, is an affair not of years but of months’ (*HKGG*, 2 March 1872: 99). One of Stewart’s main frustrations – and in this respect he was echoing complaints made in other colonies – was that most students failed to complete the seven years of education that he had so meticulously prepared:

... when the boys reach that stage in their progress when they would be capable of appreciating, and profiting by, a more advanced course of instruction they leave school for situations in which they can turn their knowledge of English to practical account. They have not yet learned to consider education an aim in itself. It is, at present, but a means to a particular end, and the minimum that can serve their purpose is all that they seek for. (*HKBB*, 1866: 279)

When considering the pragmatic motives of Central School students, it is perhaps significant that a substantial number of Stewart’s senior pupils were grown men, as may be seen from the following extract about prize giving at the school in 1873:

Just as one was coming to the conclusion that the bright, sharp looking little fellows were infinitely ahead of their more stupid looking classmates a succession of heavy-faced, elderly scholars, whom it would be irony to call “boys,” came to the front as successful prize takers. (*CM*, 21 January 1873: 3)

Stewart himself acknowledged that ‘nearly all’ of the first class and ‘many’ of those in the second were married (*HKBB*, 1870: 298). It is worth noting that at this stage the Central School was essentially an elementary school; yet it was attended by a significant number of

married men. These ‘boys’ had not come for a complete education; they were there to pick up a smattering of English. The Central School thus appears to have been regarded as a kind of language school. Stewart, however, was not prepared to teach elementary business English (which is what his pupils apparently wanted and needed); in his view, ‘mere’ English teaching did not constitute a ‘sound education’. Real and lasting success, he believed, would come only to those students who patiently and systematically mastered the fundamentals of English:

... there is such a demand for English-speaking Chinese that many of the boys leave as soon as they can perform the duties of compositors or copying clerks ... This state of things will work its own cure here as it did in India. Mere smatterers in English will become too numerous for the demand, and those only who have made some solid attainments in the language will be sought after and employed. (*HKBB*, 1865: 280)

During the Stewart era, a fundamental mismatch thus existed between the beliefs of the Headmaster and many of his students over the nature, purpose and method of education provided at the Central School. This mismatch, it should be emphasised, was not manifested in open conflict in the classroom; quite the opposite, in fact, for as Stewart observed, a Chinese boys’ school was a ‘disciplinarian’s paradise’ (*HKBB*, 1870: 298). There is little doubt, however, that his students’ pragmatic and short-sighted approach to education was a source of frustration and disappointment to Stewart.

Despite the linguistic and educational problems which beset the Central School between 1862 and 1876, it would appear that the colonial authorities were broadly satisfied with the school’s work and progress (Anon., 1877: 5). While it is true that Stewart’s secular policy led to the accusation that the school was a ‘godless’ institution (*HKGG*, 7 March 1874: 103), there was little overt criticism of his language policies or practices during this period. Evidence of the government’s satisfaction with its flagship school may be found in Governor Kennedy’s (1872-1877) speeches at the school’s prize giving ceremonies in the

final years of his administration. In 1876, he claimed that ‘there was but little fault to be found with the school’, which he believed provided an education ‘of an eminently practical nature’ (*CM*, 18 January 1876: 2). In his farewell address, Kennedy described his attitude towards the school and its Headmaster in terms which contrasted markedly with those of his controversial successor, Sir John Pope Hennessy, who, as we shall see, rapidly became Stewart’s *bête noire*:

If I have not myself taken a very practical or active part in connection with the school, I have done that which I think is much better – I have encouraged and supported, and left it to those who are much more competent than myself to perform such work, and I believe that in doing so I have done much more good than any intermeddling on my part in the details of the school could have effected. (*CM*, 26 January 1877: 2)

Kennedy signed off with a ringing endorsement of Stewart’s years at the helm of government education: ‘I am happy to think in leaving this Colony I shall leave an education system here in progress which works better and more systematically than any with which I am acquainted elsewhere’ (*ibid.*: 2). Stewart would doubtless draw succour from these words during the turbulent years that were to follow.

Chapter Five

Disputes and deliberations over language policy: The Governorship of Sir John Pope Hennessy (1877-1882)

This chapter analyses the disputes and deliberations over language in Hong Kong education during the Governorship of Sir John Pope Hennessy. Although language policy had been a source of controversy at various times during the 1860s and 1870s, it was not until Hennessy's term that conflict over the role of English in Hong Kong's education system came fully into the open. One consequence of this sudden upsurge of interest in language policy was that the colonial and metropolitan authorities were finally forced to confront the issues and problems associated with two decades of government-sponsored English-language education. From a research perspective, the debates and decisions about language policy during this period provide revealing evidence of the British government's position on the study and use of English in colonial education and society. This accounts for the micro-level perspective adopted in the chapter. The first section details Hennessy's assault on the Central School during his first year in office. The second section examines correspondence over the 1878 Education Conference's resolutions on language policy. The final section analyses the proceedings of the Education Commission (1880-1882).

5.1 Pope Hennessy's assault on the Central School

5.1.1 Sir John Pope Hennessy and the adoption of a 'pro-Chinese' policy

As we shall see, Hennessy sought from the outset to promote the study and use of English in Hong Kong education and society. Given the 'colonialist conspiracy' interpretation of British motives advanced in the polemical literature on colonial language policy, it might be supposed that Hennessy's policy to spread the English language was motivated solely by the desire to promote British political, economic and cultural interests. While such considerations undoubtedly (and understandably) underlay Hennessy's desire to cultivate an English-speaking Chinese community in Hong Kong, it would be an over simplification to characterise his policy as a straightforward case of linguistic or cultural subjugation. As discussed below, Hennessy's efforts to promote English-language education were motivated (at least in part) by his desire to enhance the status of the Chinese community in a territory controlled by what he regarded as – and what recent scholarship has proven to be (Munn, 2001) – an unsympathetic, intrusive and (at times) repressive foreign regime. Hennessy's 'pro-English' policy in education was therefore a function of his 'pro-Chinese' policy in the political and social spheres. To understand Hennessy's motives in promoting a 'pro-Chinese' policy in Hong Kong (which mirrored his 'pro-native' policies elsewhere), we need to know something of his background and character.

An Irish nationalist, a Catholic, and (somewhat incongruously) a Tory, Hennessy was hardly cast from the conventional mould of the Victorian governor. Before embarking on his tempestuous career in colonial administration, Hennessy had sat in Parliament (as the first Catholic Conservative) where he made his name for promoting the principle of open competitive examinations for civil service appointments (Stephen and Lee, 1973). Despite his apparent acceptance by the political establishment in London – his colonial career owed

everything to Disraeli's patronage – and the duties which fell to him as the Crown's representative, Hennessey's record in Labuan, the Gold Coast, the Bahamas and the Windward Islands between 1867 and 1877, and in Mauritius after his term in Hong Kong, suggests that he was hardly a loyal or determined advocate of British interests (as these were conventionally understood); nor, given his reputation as a 'stormy petrel', did he possess the qualities of tact, reliability and judgement which the Colonial Office habitually looked for in its governors (Pope-Hennessey, 1964).

Lowe and McLaughlin (1992) argue that Hennessey's pro-native colonial policy – dubbed 'Chinomania' by Hong Kong's establishment Press – was a natural product of his upbringing as a Celt and a Catholic in a country held in subjection by a foreign power. As an Irish nationalist, Hennessey had an instinctive sympathy for the underdog and the downtrodden. In each of his postings, Hennessey therefore sought to elevate the status of the subject peoples (*vis-à-vis* the mainly Protestant Anglo-Scottish colonists) by pursuing a policy of racial equality. Hennessey's sensitivity to native interests was manifested in his encouragement of indigenous representation in government and the removal of racially-based inequalities and discrimination in the criminal justice system (Lowe and McLaughlin, 1993). In each case, and Hong Kong was no exception, Hennessey's enlightened – and, for the time, unusually radical – espousal of the native cause provoked outrage among the European elite, who vociferously argued that racial segregation was essential to the maintenance of stability and prosperity. In most colonial settings, Hennessey's pro-native sympathies would by themselves have been sufficient to incite controversy; what exacerbated his problems, however, was an impulsive, waspish temperament which invariably provoked irritation rather than conciliation, and an administrative style which,

though not lacking in panache, was almost wholly devoid of sense, method and efficiency (Stephen and Lee, 1973).

When he arrived in Hong Kong, Hennessy found a society which he (rightly) conceived to be unjust and unequal. As we have seen, political power was monopolised by a coterie of British officials and merchants, who, for the most part, evinced little interest in the language or culture of the Chinese community. Although the Chinese were rapidly overtaking the Europeans in terms of wealth, their vital role in the colony's economic development was not reflected in the political arena. In marked contrast to the Anglo-Scottish oligarchy, Hennessy believed that the native community, and particularly its business and professional elite, should participate in the governance of a colony whose prosperity was increasingly dependent on native enterprise and endeavour. For Hennessy, one means of integrating the Chinese elite into the colonial establishment, and more generally of bridging the chasm which separated the Chinese and European communities, was the promotion of English-language education.

In a speech at the Central School in January 1880, Hennessy outlined his mission to nurture an acculturated English-speaking Chinese community in Hong Kong:

It is my wish – it has been the ambition of every one who has preceded me as Governor here, and the Policy of all Secretaries of State who have written to me or to any of my predecessors – that this Colony shall be made an Anglo-Chinese Colony where Her Majesty's subjects and thousands of thousands of Chinese with a knowledge of English and English laws shall live happily under these Laws, loyal to their Sovereign and a strength to Her Empire. I hold that this Education Scheme will be a powerful reality if it should act in any way in achieving for us an Anglo-Chinese Community such as this. I have over and over again expressed my desire to see such an Anglo-Chinese Community as this springing from the children of the Colony ... They are wedded to the Colony; all their future interests are wrapped up in it. They will form such a community in time. If this can be done it will facilitate the operations of European merchants who desire to have a staff of good Chinese clerks and assistants under them. The Secretary of State desires to secure this, and to establish such a loyal and contented class of subjects as this would be. (CM, 30 January 1880: 3)

Although Hennessy's vision of a just and harmonious Anglo-Chinese society represented a radical departure from existing policy (notwithstanding his questionable initial remarks), this was still a society run wholly on British terms: if the Chinese wanted a stake in colonial Hong Kong, they would have to learn English. Hennessy's 'liberalism' did not apparently allow for the possibility that the ruling class should learn the language of the majority. It is also significant, particularly given the charge that colonial language policy was dictated by the needs of British commerce, that Hennessy justified his pro-English policy partly on the grounds that it would ensure a ready supply of subordinate functionaries for the European business community.

Shortly before leaving Hong Kong, Hennessy was guest of honour at a banquet given by the Tung Wah Hospital. Though ostensibly a charitable institution, the Tung Wah rapidly became the centre of Chinese power in the territory, and the main channel of communication between the native community and the colonial authorities (Sinn, 1989). In his valedictory speech, its Chairman, Ng Choy, an English-educated barrister, praised Hennessy for pursuing an equitable racial policy during his period in office:

Gentlemen, I may mention this that the idea of the Chinese entertaining a Governor of Hongkong would have been out of the question ten years ago. At that time there was a great gulf between the Governor and the Chinese who were governed ... it appears that the guiding principle of His Excellency is to treat all classes of Her Majesty's subjects alike, without distinction of race. (Applause). His Motto is to hold the balance evenly between all classes of Her Majesty's subjects, and to him an Englishman born in London, is no more than a poor Chinaman born under the British flag in Hongkong. (CM, 28 February 1882: 3)

Ng also expressed satisfaction with Hennessy's attempts to promote English:

In matters of education His Excellency has not been unmindful. He found that of Chinese youths who were being taught English very few of them could speak it fluently; and although there are many Chinese students who are learning English very few of them could speak grammatically. Now he, His Excellency, felt that this was a great defect, and this being a British

Colony English speaking should be encouraged, and that encouragement has been given. (ibid.: 3)

Ng was the first Chinese member of the colony's Legislative Council. His appointment on 22 January 1880, a week before Hennessy's 'Anglo-Chinese community' speech, owed everything to the Governor's initiative, and was thus a practical manifestation of Hennessy's desire to grant the Chinese a voice in the colonial establishment.

The foregoing material about Hennessy's life and outlook is essential if we wish to understand his motives in promoting the study and use of English in Hong Kong. It also helps to explain his frustration with Stewart's Central School for what he saw as its failure to promote bilingualism. This broader perspective on Hennessy's motives is noticeably absent from Bickley's (1997) account of the conflict over language policy during the Irishman's term. Here Hennessy is portrayed as a meddlesome incompetent engaged in a seemingly unprincipled campaign against an institution which under Stewart's enlightened direction was gradually acquiring the hallmarks of an Oriental Eton. An unfortunate consequence of Bickley's approach is that she inadvertently aligns herself with the virulent anti-Hennessy rhetoric of the colony's English-language newspapers, which, being representative of the Anglo-Scottish business community, had little sympathy for the plight of 'John Chinaman'. Doubtless aware of Hennessy's pro-native policies elsewhere, the establishment Press was from the outset quick to seize upon any proposed reforms which might upset the status quo, including, as we shall see, any attempts to tamper with the Central School.

5.1.2 Early skirmishes over language policy and practice

Speculation over Hennessy's likely attitude towards the Chinese community began soon after his arrival in Hong Kong (22 April 1877) (see *CM*, 31 May 1877: 2). In early June, the *China Mail* complained that the new Governor exhibited a 'restless desire to carry out his own ideas while they are yet crude and half-digested', an approach which contrasted markedly – and, in its view, unfavourably – with the 'masterly inactivity' displayed by his predecessor during his early months in office (*CM*, 6 June 1877: 2). Clearly perturbed about rumours of a pro-native policy, the paper decided to fire a warning shot across Hennessy's bows:

It is to be feared that Governor Hennessy may make the fatal mistake of supposing that the upsetting of existing arrangements means reform and progress, and that to legislate directly in the teeth of the present order of things – which, be it remembered, has been tested and consolidated by the experience of many years – is the proper mode of bringing relief and liberty to the so-called down-trodden Chinaman. (*ibid.*: 2)

For the *Mail*, the 'existing arrangements' which merited preservation included public floggings, the night pass system, a raft of overtly racist legislation, and the government Central School. Sensing that Stewart and his esteemed institution had already been targeted, the *Mail* alerted its readers to 'some whispers' which indicated that 'sweeping reforms' were afoot (*ibid.*: 2). This elicited a swift response from a correspondent ('A.B.C.'), who expressed surprise that Hennessy had yet to visit 'that admirable institution', despite having already taken great interest in the mission schools, especially those administered by the (Italian) Catholic Bishop, Timoleone Raimondi (*CM*, 9 June 1877: 4). A month later, another correspondent ('Education') expressed concern that the government's failure to proceed with the construction of a much-needed new Central School, despite Governor Kennedy's having already purchased a site for the building, indicated that the 'prevalent suspicion' over Hennessy's intentions was well founded (*CM*, 6 July 1877: 3).

Hennessy's first pronouncement on the Central School tended to confirm the rumours about the new Governor's antagonistic attitude towards the flagship school. In a despatch to Lord Carnarvon on 20 July 1877, Hennessy complained about the large number of uneducated children in Hong Kong, and the minimal effect of the education grant on the lower classes. In Hennessy's view, and in this he was reiterating an argument regularly advanced by Raimondi (see *CM*, 17 May 1877: 2), the colonial government devoted a disproportionate amount of money to the 'middle class' Central School (CO 129/178: 393). Hennessy's dissatisfaction was duly noted in an internal minute at the Colonial Office (31 August): 'The Governor,' wrote C.P. Lucas, 'is determined to make out that the schools are bad, and even where he has to allow that the Central School has succeeded, he gives every possible reason for supposing that it is no better than it ought to be' (ibid.: 389). It would appear, however, that Hennessy's complaints fell on deaf ears, for in his official reply (15 September) Carnarvon 'warned' the Governor against 'interfering with a system, which so far as it has hitherto been carried, appears not to have worked otherwise than successfully' (ibid.: 397-398).

Hennessy's despatch seems to have been prompted by the disappointing results of a competitive examination for a government clerkship on 10 July. The Board of Examiners, which included Ng Choy, failed all eleven candidates on account of their 'want of power or experience in translating Chinese into English' (*HKGG*, 11 August 1877: 363). Hennessy ordered that the Examiners' report and the candidates' 'defective' papers be published in the *Government Gazette*, and in an accompanying minute expressed the hope that 'the teaching staff of the Colony' would 'see the errors that have to be avoided' (ibid.: 364). In an editorial two days later, the *China Mail* sarcastically thanked the Governor for the 'amusement' which *Gazette* readers might derive from 'the difficulties the Chinese

experience in writing the English language'; problems, it claimed, which could partly be attributed to 'the absurd practice Europeans have adopted of importing their ideas and wishes to the Chinese in pidgin English' (*CM*, 13 August 1877: 2). It was left to 'A.B.C.' to spell out Hennessy's motives in publishing the candidates' scripts, namely that he wished to discredit Stewart and his colleagues. Nothing, warned 'A.B.C.', would be better calculated to 'ruffle the feathers of this community' than an attack on the Central School (*CM*, 14 August 1877: 3), as indeed proved to be the case when the broadsides began.

5.1.3 Catholic attacks on the Central School

We have already noted that Hennessy's English-oriented policy was one facet of his wider policy of integrating the Chinese elite into the colonial establishment. Given his desire to promote the study and use of English, it was understandable that from the outset he would focus his attention on the colony's principal English school. It was equally understandable, given our knowledge of Stewart's problems (see 4.3.4), that Hennessy would rapidly conclude that the Central School was not an especially powerful force for the diffusion of English. Even if we leave to one side the Governor's propensity for antagonising his officials, it was inevitable that Hennessy and Stewart would at some point clash over the teaching and learning of English at the school. It is important to note, however, that the spark which ignited the Hennessy-Stewart conflict was not so much political or personal as religious.

Like many other educational controversies during the Victorian era, the dispute about English in Hong Kong had its origins in the 'religious question'. We need not concern ourselves with the details of the debate; what is important, though, is to see how arguments over the roles of church and state in education spilled over into the spheres of language

policy and practice. Briefly, the Central School controversy stemmed from the opposition of the Catholic missions to the provisions of Stewart's grant-in-aid scheme, which they argued exalted secular education (Eitel, 1890-91). Under Raimondi's influence, the Catholic schools refused to enter the scheme, and thus received no support from the government. The opportune arrival of a Catholic Governor, however, enabled Raimondi to highlight the injustice of a policy which allowed the bulk of public funding to be devoted to one 'ineffective' school, whereas his own schools, which made a valuable contribution to the colony, received nothing. The question was therefore: Could the Central School justify its *raison d'être*?

This question was posed by Anon. (1877), who can now be revealed as the prominent barrister J.J. Francis (see CO 129/186: 428-429), in a pamphlet which presented the Catholic case against the school. Francis's tract is mainly concerned with religious issues, and thus does not merit detailed examination. However, his partisan analysis of the school's defects provides important evidence about the background and attitudes of its pupils, and this deserves consideration since it accords with observations made about students of English in other colonial contexts. Echoing Hennessy, Francis pointed out that the school's principal attendees were the sons of 'well-to-do middle class chinamen' [*sic*] (Anon., 1877: 30) rather than the poor who, he believed, had 'the best and strongest claim on the educational fund' (*ibid.*: 35). In Francis's view, local tradesmen, shopkeepers and artisans (whom he categorised as 'middle class') sent their sons to the school 'to learn English enough for immediate use'; they neither wanted nor valued subjects such as History and Chemistry, but were nevertheless compelled to waste time and effort studying them (*ibid.*: 31). Perhaps significantly, Francis claimed that the Central School was viewed with 'disdain' by the wealthiest Chinese, who preferred to send their sons to Canton for a

Confucian education (which, being the basis for the civil service examinations, was essential if they wished to pursue the traditional path to power and prestige) (ibid.: 29).

Francis's testimony lends weight to H.H. Wilson's argument that the 'wrong' class of colonial subject tended to receive an English education (see 2.1.7). As Wilson had foreseen, the sons of the petty bourgeoisie showed little interest in Western knowledge and ideas; all they wanted from an English education was a smattering of its language, which they had to acquire through the tedious study of otiose content subjects. The class which did, in Wilson's view, possess the potential to benefit from a complete course of English studies was the traditional elite. In Hong Kong, however, as in India, this was a class which seems – at least initially – to have shunned the new learning. From the perspective of the middle and lower classes, it might be argued that English-language education offered an alternative route to social and economic mobility, and one that became increasingly popular (*vis-à-vis* the old learning) as the colonial order solidified. Viewed in this light, it may be the case that some sections of native society, especially those whose interests were tied to the new order, regarded the colonial English school less as a vehicle for linguistic or cultural imperialism than as a possible source of liberation from the subordinate station they had occupied in the pre-colonial hierarchy (e.g. Yung, 1909: 2-3).

Rather than speculate on the Central School's role in nurturing a new native elite, Francis preferred to highlight its manifest failure to promote the use of English in Hong Kong. Where, he asked, were all the English-speaking pupils of the Central School? They were not on the jury list, which had just one Chinese name. They had scarcely distinguished themselves in the recent government examination, so they were no use as interpreters. In short, the school did 'little real good to the colony' (ibid.: 32), and was therefore 'totally unable to justify its *raison d'être*' (ibid.: 37).

Francis's tract provoked a flurry of letters to the Press in late 1877. In a hostile editorial, the *China Mail* claimed that the 'manifesto' was a product of the Italian Mission, and thus reflected the views of 'the known opponent of the school' (*CM*, 30 November 1877: 2). This elicited a sharp retort from the 'Anonymous Author', who denied that Raimondi had written or instigated his 'little pamphlet' (*CM*, 1 December 1877: 3). From the perspective of the present study, what is interesting about the controversy is that most correspondents were preoccupied with questions of religion in education rather than language in education. The only exception was the soon-to-be Inspector of Schools, E.J. Eitel, who, in defending the status quo, argued that it was 'absolutely necessary' for the colony to have a 'first-class Elementary School teaching both the Chinese and English languages', not least because the government required 'a staff of clerks and other subordinate officers knowing both Chinese and English well' (*CM*, 13 December 1877: 3). Although Eitel was not writing on the government's behalf, his testimony suggests that the administration had traditionally looked to the Central School for a steady supply of bilingual functionaries. Hitherto, it would seem, the quality of their English skills had not been a source of public concern (even though, internally, there may have been disquiet). Unlike his predecessors, however, Hennessy was not prepared to ignore the school's failings, inevitable though they were in the circumstances, and no matter how painful their public exposure would be to its conscientious Headmaster.

5.1.4 Criticism of English-language education at the Central School

Hennessy paid his first visit to the Central School on 5 January 1878. The *China Mail* (8 January 1878: 2), ever alert to slights to the old order, found it ‘rather singular’ that the Governor should take so long to inspect the colony’s premier government school, but chose not to speculate on the impressions he might have formed of its workings. That these were not especially favourable was indicated in a speech on 18 January at St Paul’s College, Ng Choy’s recently re-opened *alma mater*. In a scarcely concealed swipe at the Central School, Hennessy observed that the native officials who ‘spoke and read English best’ had been educated at St Paul’s (*CM*, 18 January 1878: 2) during what Anon. (1877: 35) had called ‘its old and palmy days’.

Thus far Hennessy’s policy towards the Central School had been a matter of conjecture. His attitude was perceived to be hostile, and yet his precise intentions remained unclear. The school’s prize day on 25 January afforded the Governor an ideal platform to set out his views on language policy. In his speech, Hennessy acknowledged that education had been debated ‘in every shape and form’ for many years, and that, from the moment of his arrival, the Press had been urging him to announce his policy on the subject (*HKGG*, 26 January 1878: 28). Hennessy, however, claimed that, rather than work from preconceived ideas, he had preferred to ‘pay some attention to the actual educational condition of the Colony, to study it on the spot’ (*ibid.*: 28). It was on this apparently empirical basis that the Governor declared that he would do everything in his power ‘to promote the success of this institution’ (*ibid.*: 28).

No sooner had the applause died down than Hennessy embarked upon a detailed – and, to Stewart, embarrassing – criticism of the quality and extent of English-language education at the school. Recalling his inspection three weeks before, Hennessy reported that

he had visited a large classroom where neither the teachers nor the pupils could speak English. This apparently surprising finding prompted Hennessy to put Stewart on the spot about his students' oral skills:

During the whole of the year we have had six hundred and ten pupils attending the school. I asked Mr. Stewart this morning how many of these were able to speak English, and he said under fifty or sixty, and this small number very imperfectly. Now, these are grave facts ... In this English Colony we must not be satisfied with 60 out of 600 being able to speak English in our principal Government school, and that imperfectly. After Hong Kong has enjoyed thirty years of Colonial Government and large annual grants for education, I expected to find the new generation with something like a knowledge of English. The system unfortunately is that after learning perhaps only what we might call a smattering of our language, a few of the pupils leave the school and go at once into native business houses, whilst nine tenths leave the Government school entirely ignorant of the English language. (ibid.: 29)

Hennessy then proceeded to outline his policy to promote the study and use of English:

In this Colony – and in that respect it is unlike Singapore – you don't meet with many Chinese who in the ordinary course of business can speak or write English. I think one of our principal duties as educationists should be to increase the number of English speaking and English writing Chinese inhabitants of Hong Kong. We must endeavour to do that not only by means of this valuable institution, but also by the other educational agencies in this Colony. (ibid.: 29)

Although the Governor's pro-English policy was now clear, as the *Mail* pointed out, he was 'remarkably vague' about its implementation (*CM*, 26 January 1878: 4). Hennessy's reluctance to formulate a detailed plan appears to have stemmed from Carnarvon's 'warning' against interfering with an apparently successful system. Hennessy knew that if he wished to introduce reforms, he would have to secure Whitehall's approval. It was to this end that he wrote to Carnarvon (27 January) to express his disappointment at the 'failure of the Government scheme of Education to teach English to the Chinese youths of the Colony' (*CO* 129/181: 135). In his despatch, Hennessy claimed that Europeans attendees of prize day had expressed surprise at the 'real facts respecting the amount of English education

given by the Central School' (ibid.: 137). The Governor also claimed that he had 'heard complaints on this subject' from Chinese shopkeepers and other native residents, and that it had been 'partly' at their suggestion that he had 'looked into' the problem (ibid.: 137). This investigation, he informed Carnarvon, had encompassed the village schools, where he 'could not find a single Government Teacher who spoke English' (ibid.: 137). Hennessy attached no blame to Stewart for this unsatisfactory state of affairs, but then went on to report that 'old residents' held that 'the Chinese youth of the Colony were better instructed in English fifteen years ago than at present' (ibid.: 138).

While he awaited Whitehall's reply, which when it arrived invited the Governor to propose a 'remedy' for the alleged 'defect', Hennessy requested Stewart to compile a list of pupils in the village schools who could speak English. In his somewhat exasperated reply (29 January), Stewart pointed out – and this was information that Hennessy could have gleaned from the Inspector's reports – that the village schools were 'simply Schools where the children receive a *Chinese* education in their own language' (HKGG, 16 February 1878: 52). Hennessy also busied himself preparing an important address about language policy for speech day at St Joseph's College, the Catholic missions' flagship English school.

5.1.5 Speech Day at St Joseph's College and its aftermath

We noted in 5.1.3 that the Catholic schools did not at this stage receive government support since they objected to Stewart's grant-in-aid scheme. We also pointed out that prominent Catholics resented the fact that Stewart's 'defective' school received a disproportionate amount of government funding. These two factors explain the underlying theme of the speeches delivered by Raimondi and Francis, namely that St Joseph's, through its linguistically proficient graduates, was providing a valuable service for Hong Kong

business, and yet received nothing from the authorities in return. With Hennessy in attendance, Raimondi was understandably keen to trumpet the success of the Catholic schools, claiming that they had ‘answered’ the ‘great want which was proclaimed by the late Governors and the press of Hongkong of having the English language widely spread and spoken’ (*CM*, 9 February 1878: 4). As might be expected, Francis launched a fresh assault on the Central School, although, as the *Mail* pointed out (*CM*, 13 February 1878: 2), he was not above misrepresenting Stewart’s somewhat artless response to Hennessy’s blunt enquiry about his students’ English skills:

... he [Francis] was astonished to find at the recent examination of the Central School that only forty or fifty of the Chinese youths receiving instruction there were being taught English, or able to speak the language to any extent. He was under the impression previously that every Chinese boy who went there was taught English, and he was much surprised to find that that was not the case. (*CM*, 9 February 1878: 4)

In highlighting the effectiveness of St Joseph’s (*vis-à-vis* the Central School), neither speaker (for obvious reasons) chose to mention two factors which helped to explain the alleged disparity in English-language attainments between the two institutions: first, its pupils were predominantly Portuguese – and thus already fluent in a language from the same linguistic family as English – whereas Stewart’s were mainly Chinese; second, its mission was ‘to impart a plain commercial English education’ (*CM*, 11 February 1878: 2), whereas the Central School offered a ‘general’ Anglo-Chinese education.

Hennessy’s speech provides revealing evidence of the intentions which underlay British attempts to promote the study and use of English in Hong Kong and elsewhere. Early in his address, Hennessy referred to a ‘remarkable speech’ by W.E. Forster, progenitor of the Education Act (1870), in which he had apparently argued that Britain’s ‘first duty’ in the Empire was to ‘impose the language of England upon the British colonies’, and thereby ‘imitate the ancient Government of Rome’ (*CM*, 9 February 1878: 4).

Unsurprisingly, Hennessy doubted whether (thus far) the colonial administration in Hong Kong had fulfilled its obligations in this regard. For Hennessy, one consequence of the schools' failure to spread English was that government and business were forced to recruit 'very expensive' clerks from England (ibid.: 4). Echoing the views of leading officials and merchants, Hennessy argued that it would be more economically viable to 'train up' English-speaking Chinese and Portuguese youths to 'discharge the duties of clerks' (ibid.: 4). If, however, European employers wished to have access to a substantial pool of proficient clerical staff it was essential that in future 'no boy should ... leave the Government Schools without being able to speak English' (ibid.: 5). To achieve this objective, Hennessy said that he intended to 'frame a scheme which will for the first time carry out in this Colony what a predecessor of mine, Sir John Davis, foretold would come to pass, but which has not done so – that we should have here a Chinese English speaking community' (ibid.: 5). Hennessy then added his own contribution to the 'declining standard of English' discourse (see 1.2.5 for variations on the theme):

... he [Davis] foretold that if the plans of education he was recommending were carried out, that in fifteen or twenty years they would have the rising generation of Chinese in Hong Kong speaking English. What is the result? I come as a stranger to the Colony, and I am told by those who were living here in those old days, that comparing the Chinese population then with what it is now, there are less English speaking Chinese in Hongkong at the present time than there were then. (ibid.: 5)

Hennessy's testimony – and that of Raimondi – is intriguing since it suggests that the diffusion of English in Hong Kong had been a long-standing aim of both the colonial and metropolitan governments. This objective does not, however, emerge strongly from Colonial Office records or from Stewart's reports, although it is possible that Hennessy, in advancing his claim, had access to documents which are no longer available. Perhaps a more plausible explanation is that Hennessy was seeking to downplay what he knew was a

major policy shift by emphasising its continuity with previous initiatives. The wording of a *Mail* editorial tends to bear this out as it indicates that the promotion of English-language education represented a significant departure from existing policy:

His Excellency appears to be strangely fascinated with this desire to extend the teaching of the English language; and as the head of the Government he is bound to encourage English speaking as much as possible, in accordance with his other principles. He must, however, continue to teach Chinese as well, and he must also deal fairly with those who desire to learn both Chinese and English. (*CM*, 11 February 1878: 2)

Hennessy followed his St Joseph's speech with two despatches to Carnarvon about language policy. In the first (10 February), he reported his Council's 'surprise that there should be in an English colony, Government schools supported entirely by Government funds, in which neither teachers nor scholars know anything of English' (*CO* 129/181: 159). The Governor's despatch arrived in Whitehall on 25 March, by which time Sir Michael Hicks Beach had replaced Carnarvon as Secretary of State. Colonial Office minutes indicate that officials were somewhat frustrated at Hennessy's failure to propose a 'remedy' to his 'complaint', although one official thought that 'his recommendation will be to the effect that denominational (i.e. Roman Catholic) teaching will alone secure proficiency in English' (*ibid.*: 156). In his second despatch (11 February), which reported on speech day at St Joseph's, Hennessy emphasised the 'importance' he attached to 'encouraging an English speaking community of Chinese in Hong Kong' (*ibid.*: 169). The prospect of an Anglophone society springing up on the China coast was not apparently viewed with any great enthusiasm in the Colonial Office, whose sole response was a somewhat exasperated internal minute: 'Wait until he stops sending despatches about English and then consider the subject and his suggestions all together' (*ibid.*: 169).

Meanwhile, Hennessy himself was seeking proposals to solve the language problem. On 10 February, he solicited Stewart's views on the 'arrangements' which might be

introduced to give ‘greater facility to the boys at the Central School for the study of the English language’ (*HKGG*, 16 February 1878: 52). In his reply two days later, a rather perturbed Stewart noted that there was ‘a serious misapprehension abroad as to the working of the Central School’ (*ibid.*: 53). In consequence of Francis’s speech, it was now widely believed that only a small number of boys were taught English, and that English teaching was ‘subordinated to the study of Chinese’ (*ibid.*: 53). Stewart, however, wished to disabuse the public of this perception (and for this reason asked that his letter be published in the *Government Gazette*):

Every boy in the Central School is taught English during four hours every day, a period which I think it impossible to extend with any good result. In addition to this teaching of English, but in subordination to it, the boys are also taught their own language by non-English-speaking masters; for I hold that no boy can master a foreign language without a competent knowledge of his own ... (ibid.: 53)

In response to Hennessy’s request for proposals, Stewart claimed that it would be ‘impossible’ to improve the quality of English-language education without a new building, more accommodation, smaller classes, and a stronger staff of teachers; measures, he pointed out, that he had ‘repeatedly’ recommended in his reports. As the *Mail* (18 February 1878: 2) observed, the authorities’ failure to implement Stewart’s proposals was the principal cause of the language muddle. The *Mail* trusted that the Headmaster’s impending home leave would give him the opportunity to ‘arouse the somewhat sleepy energies of the Colonial Office on this matter’ (*ibid.*: 2), which suggests that Whitehall was perceived locally to lack initiative in questions of language policy.

The same charge could not, however, be levelled at Hennessy. On 20 February, he fired off another despatch about English, this time lamenting his inability to find a single Central School graduate who ‘knew enough of English to fit him to be a juror’ (CO 129/181: 174). The Governor also enclosed Press reports of the previous day’s Legislative Council

proceedings, at which he had recommended that a conference be held to ‘arrive at some definite conclusion as to what should be done on the subject of teaching English’, an issue, he believed, which greatly affected ‘the commercial and political interests of the Colony’ (ibid.: 182). The proposed conference took place the following week (25 February), and, as the next section reveals, its resolutions on language policy resulted in a greatly enlarged role for English teaching in the government schools.

5.2 The Education Conference (1878)

5.2.1 Resolutions on language policy

Unfortunately, there appears to be no record of the debate which informed the Conference’s decisions on language policy. We do know, however, that Hennessy presided over the Conference, and that its all-European membership comprised two educationalists (Stewart and Eitel), and six Executive/Legislative Councillors. The absence of native representation, and the preponderance of officials and merchants, ensured that the ‘commercial and political interests’ served by the Conference were wholly British in orientation. Its principal resolution represented a logical outcome of Hennessy’s campaign for English since his arrival, namely that ‘the primary object to be borne in view by the Government should be the teaching of English’ (*HKGG*, 9 March 1878: 90).

The adoption of an English-oriented language policy had important consequences for the Central School’s balanced Anglo-Chinese curriculum. To enable the school ‘to give more time to English and less time to Chinese studies’, without ‘materially diminishing’ students’ proficiency in Chinese (ibid.: 90), the Conference decided to raise the school’s admission requirements in Chinese. More significantly, the number of hours devoted to English each day was extended to five, while the number allotted to Chinese was reduced to

two and a half. These decisions received attendees' unanimous support. The only issue that provoked a division was the question of making the study of Chinese 'optional on the declaration of the parents' (ibid.: 90). Stewart and two British merchants voted in favour of making Chinese compulsory, whereas five members, including Eitel, thought it should be optional. When this question was eventually put to Chinese parents, 126 indicated that they wished their sons to study English only, whereas 235 opted for instruction in both English and Chinese (*CM*, 24 September 1878: 2). To facilitate 'the proper teaching of English' at the Central School, all participants agreed that 'increased accommodation, more English speaking Masters, and smaller classes' were essential (*HKGG*, 9 March 1878: 90). Finally, and this was arguably its most far-reaching decision, the Conference resolved that 'with regard to the other Government Schools entirely supported by Government arrangements be made, as soon as possible, to teach the boys English in all of them' (ibid.: 90).

The controversy over language policy had forced Stewart to postpone his departure for Britain until 7 March. Now that the dispute had apparently been resolved, Stewart was perhaps turning his thoughts towards his first home leave in sixteen years. If this was the case, he was in for a shock, for on 1 March he received an urgent minute from Hennessy ordering him to draw up a list of all the pupils at the Central School who could 'speak English' (reproduced in the *HKGG*, 4 May 1878: 231). Precisely how he tested the students is unclear, but in his reply of 5 March Stewart stated that 18 Chinese boys could speak English with 'considerable fluency', 58 could do so 'with diffidence', while the remaining 336 could not 'speak English' at all (ibid.: 231). The following week, Hennessy instructed Stewart's deputy, Alexander Falconer, to add the age and length of attendance to the names on the original list. The full – and, to its supporters, damaging – record of the school's performance in the area of spoken English was published, on Hennessy's orders, in the

Gazette on 4 May. As he steamed towards Europe, unaware of this latest attack, Stewart doubtless pondered the possible effects of the Conference's resolutions, and the likely response of the Colonial Office. One thing, it may be supposed, that did not enter his thoughts was the possibility that he would be required to defend his approach to teaching English as a foreign language before the Mandarins of Whitehall. This, though, was one of the onerous tasks that befell him during an apparently stressful period of leave in Britain.

5.2.2 Correspondence over language policy and practice

The Education Conference's resolutions, as set out in the *Gazette* on 9 March, represented the 36-year-old colonial government's first explicit statement of aims in the sphere of language policy. Given their historical significance, and particularly given Hennessy's claim that the promotion of English had been a long-standing British objective in Hong Kong, it is illuminating to examine the response of the metropolitan government to the 'new' policy, which the Governor announced in a despatch of 26 March. Colonial Office records indicate that officials in London were somewhat taken aback by the Conference's decisions. In a minute of 4 May, Lucas noted that the resolutions were 'rather sweeping' (CO 129/181: 221). Several days later, another official observed that the 'Teaching of English can scarcely be said to be the primary object of educating Chinese boys even though it may be an important one' [underlining in the original] (ibid.: 221). He then candidly and presciently went straight to the heart of the problem of English teaching in Hong Kong: 'It is really a question of funds and has I think hitherto failed for want of funds to purchase proper masters' (ibid.: 221). In essence, this was the argument that Stewart had advanced in his minute of 12 February: if the Hong Kong authorities wished to improve the quality of English-language education at the Central School, they would have to provide the

requisite funding to recruit more teachers, form smaller classes and provide a better learning environment.

Whitehall's official response to the resolutions, in the shape of a despatch from Hicks Beach to Hennessy (14 May), condensed and formalised the ideas that Colonial Office staff had advanced in their internal minutes. In his despatch, Hicks Beach stated that while he agreed that 'a proper teaching of the English language is of very great importance and any shortcoming in this should, if possible, be remedied', he nevertheless believed that the resolutions were 'somewhat too strongly worded in affirming that such teaching should be the primary object to be borne in mind by the government' since 'this proposition would make it appear that the government might properly pay less attention to other matters of importance' (ibid.: 224). Despite his apparent opposition to an English-oriented policy, tentatively expressed though it was, Hicks Beach intimated that he would not necessarily overrule such a policy as he requested Hennessy to provide 'details of the scheme by which you intend to carry out the resolutions' (ibid.: 224). Recognising the increase in expenditure that would inevitably arise if the proposals were implemented, he also requested the Governor to explain how he intended to 'raise the necessary funds for the purpose' (ibid.: 224), a clear sign that the British government had no intention of footing the bill.

Hicks Beach's despatch is revealing in two important respects. First, he avoids giving a clear and definitive ruling on the question of language policy. While he acknowledges the 'very great importance' of English teaching in Hong Kong, he hesitates to state that this should be the 'primary' object of government education since 'other matters' were equally deserving of attention. Hicks Beach, however, chooses not to spell out what these 'other matters' might be, although the obvious implication is that due consideration should be given to Chinese education. His evasiveness on these points might be regarded as

a further manifestation of the spirit of compromise, or confusion of purpose, that characterised British decision-making in the area of colonial language policy (see 2.1.7).

The other illuminating feature of the despatch is that it casts doubt on Hennessy's claim that the diffusion of English had been a long established British goal in Hong Kong. A close analysis of Colonial Office minutes indicates that officials had given little thought to the aims of language-in-education policy. Although they were fully aware of the Governor's interest in English teaching, the evidence suggests that they were caught off guard by the 'sweeping' nature of the resolutions. Hennessy's despatch thus appears to have forced Whitehall to consider its position on the study and use of English in the colony, a process that inevitably required time and information. It is possible that this, as much as the British predilection for compromise, was responsible for the fudged and prevaricating character of Hicks Beach's response. If – as Hennessy argued – an English-oriented policy had been in existence since the 1840s, Hicks Beach would presumably have given his immediate and unequivocal assent to the resolutions since they would have accorded with a long established British position. The fact that he did not do so suggests that no such policy existed, and that the whole question of language in Hong Kong education still had to be resolved.

After receiving Hicks Beach's despatch, Hennessy requested Eitel, the Acting Inspector of Schools, to prepare a report on the proposed implementation of the resolutions. Eitel's report, which was despatched to Whitehall on 13 September 1878, is revealing in that it tones down the sense of urgency that was apparent in the wording of the Conference's resolutions. It must be assumed that this was prompted by Hicks Beach's concern at the radical nature of the proposals, although it is also worth noting that the British were prone to retreat from extreme positions, particularly when uncomfortable

funding implications came into view. Eitel was therefore at pains to stress that the resolutions ‘were not intended to be carried into effect all at once, but very gradually, as opportunity might arise’ (CO 129/182: 46). One consequence of this was that the introduction of English teaching in ‘all’ the government schools would not take place ‘as soon as possible’ (as the Conference had recommended), but would ‘of necessity depend upon circumstances, upon vacancies occurring in the staff, and to some extent upon the wishes of the people’ (ibid.: 48).

Despite Eitel’s efforts to soften their impact, it appears that the resolutions were still viewed as excessively ambitious by officials in Whitehall. Colonial Office records indicate that officials were especially sceptical over the feasibility of introducing ELT in the government vernacular schools, which they apparently classed as ‘ragged schools’. In view of their humble status, one official observed that he could not ‘see why there should be so much zeal at teaching English in them – It is the middle classes, those who attend and pay fees to the Central School, who are the sort of people to learn English’ (ibid.: 40). The evidence therefore suggests that the Colonial Office, during this period at least, was rather wary about the widespread promotion of English teaching in the government sector.

Eitel’s report was one of a number of language-related despatches that officials had to deal with in the autumn of 1878 (see CO 129/182: 64-96 and 138-144). In Stewart’s absence, Hennessy intensified (and personalised) his criticisms of the Central School and (more generally) the system of education which the Scotsman had been instrumental in creating. As ever, Hennessy’s dissatisfaction stemmed from the Central School’s excessive claims on the education budget. The Governor’s most damaging despatch (4 November), from Stewart’s perspective, was prompted by the closure (again) of St Paul’s College, which he argued had ‘done more for real and solid education in Hong Kong than its

Government rival, the Central School' (CO 129/182: 281). Hennessy's despatch contained a letter from the Anglican missionary, A.B. Hutchinson, who complained that the school had 'enjoyed splendid opportunities' and yet had 'produced very inadequate effect for the vast sums' expended (ibid.: 286). Hutchinson further alleged that the Central School had not

in any way created a desire for higher education in Western Science amongst the Chinese generally. As far as I can see, it owes its crowded classes to the fact that a certain number of the natives understand the pecuniary value of a knowledge of English, and are satisfied that they can get a sufficiency of that knowledge there, cheaper and better than elsewhere. (ibid.: 286-7)

5.2.3 Stewart's defence of his policies and practices

Hennessy's autumn offensive prompted the Colonial Office to seek Stewart's views and advice on the whole question of language in Hong Kong education. In response to this request, Stewart produced two substantial memoranda (dated 15 November 1878 and 17 January 1879) which presented a vigorous (yet commendably measured) defence of his policies and practices in relation to the teaching of English. During this period he also attended a series of interviews with officials at the Colonial Office, including John Bramston, who, as a former Hong Kong bureaucrat (1874-1877), not only knew Stewart personally, but also understood the educational and religious background to the language controversy. Such was the complexity of the problem that Stewart was required to delay his return to Hong Kong in order to attend further meetings about the dispute. His final weeks in Britain were therefore as stressful as those which had preceded his departure from Hong Kong in March 1878, when, it will be recalled, Hennessy had ordered him to compile a list of pupils at the Central School who could 'speak English'. Stewart clearly resented conducting what he believed to be a patently unfair exercise, and his bitterness can only have increased when he discovered that his amended findings had been made public. His

sense of grievance is manifest in his first memorandum to the Colonial Office, which, as the extracts below reveal, provides important evidence of the problems associated with the teaching and learning of English in nineteenth-century Hong Kong.

In his memorandum, Stewart detailed his objections to the unfair criterion which Hennessy used to assess the Central School and the shallow approaches which other schools employed to teach English:

As regards the teaching of English, only one test, as far as I am aware, has been applied to it by the Governor, that, namely, of ability on the part of the scholars to “speak” English. Now, the speaking of a foreign language is by no means of easy acquisition, especially if it has to be acquired at school and there only. Many years ago, I called attention to this very subject in the Annual Report, and showed that the boys at the Central School had no opportunity of practising English speaking except during school hours. I stated further, however, that I had always found, in the case of boys who had remained a few years at the school, that after they had been for some months in situations where they had to speak and be spoken to in English, they conversed with considerable fluency and accuracy. This arose from the fact that they had acquired a vocabulary and the grammar of the language at school, and facility in their use from actual practice.

I am aware that there are Chinese residents who are exacting on this point, and that there are schools in the Colony where young men are taught colloquial English by rote from a phrase-book, without any other training in the language and probably it is this that Mr Hennessy refers to when he says that the Chinese share in the general dissatisfaction with the school. This opinion on the part of some members of the native community is due to an idea that English is very easily acquired, and that the possession of a few phrases for business purposes is all the English that any one absolutely requires.

Feeling that I had a higher duty to discharge, namely, to impart a sound education to the youth of the Colony, I have always been averse to mere parrot-work, but I have never therefore ignored the value of English speaking on the part of the boys. (CO 129/183: 362-364)

Stewart then proceeded to outline his own – and, in his view, more principled – approach to teaching English as a foreign language, which, as we have seen (4.3.4), was founded on the belief that students develop a sound understanding of grammar rather than a superficial acquaintance with a few commercial terms. He did so by quoting from a memorandum which he had written in response to a series of questions posed by Eitel

shortly before leaving Hong Kong. The extract below was his reply to Eitel's observation that the Central School paid more attention to reading, writing and grammar than to 'practical exercises' in 'colloquial English speaking':

Some educationalists adopt the first plan, and ignore the second. Others begin with the second, and follow it up with the first. The plan at the Central School has been as far as possible to conjoin both. I once tried a special class for English conversation but I found that school-boys have so few ideas in their heads, or cannot bring them up when they want them, that, after the first few minutes, the principal talking was done by myself, and a Yes or a No the share of the work done by the class. I admit that the boys might be made to commit, say, Denny's Handbook to memory, or a work might be constructed on Allendorf's [*sic*] system, but unless I am much mistaken, the cross-examination which takes place at the English lessons, especially in the Upper School, the breaking up of compound sentences into simple ones, the paraphrasing of sentences, and giving the same idea in as many different ways as possible, methods which I adopt daily with my classes, are equally effective, and certainly sounder in principle than the more mechanical methods I have referred to. (ibid.: 365)

To demonstrate the value of his approach, Stewart quoted from a letter written by Eitel (8 July 1878) updating him on developments at the school:

There has been a little more time lately given in the Central School to teaching 'English speaking', as the Governor cares for that more than for anything else. Of course, what we are doing in this direction now, in departure from your system to a certain extent, is simple see-saw work. What we gain at one end we lose at the other: if the boys learn more colloquial conversational phrases, they lose so much of that thorough acquaintance with the grammatical structure of the language, which was to you [at this point a Colonial Office official scrawled 'rightly' in the margin] of higher importance than mere facility in conversation of a shallow nature. (ibid.: 366)

Having addressed the pedagogical questions raised by Hennessy's despatches, Stewart turned his attention to the Conference's resolutions on language policy. He fully endorsed its principal recommendation, that English teaching should be the primary object of government education, arguing – in defiance of Hennessy's allegations to the contrary – that the Central School had already done 'much good' to promote the use of English in

Hong Kong. To substantiate his contention that English standards were improving rather than declining, Stewart reported the views of a veteran colonial official:

It was indeed mentioned to me by the Governor before I left, that one of the oldest members of the Council had told him that there was less English speaking in the Colony now than there was twenty years ago. I happened to mention this to Mr May, Acting Colonial Secretary, who is the longest-resident official that we have. He dissented entirely from the statement. He considered the improvement very marked, for there is hardly a native shop in the principal streets of the city now, but has some one in it who speaks English, and who can write out a bill in English, two things which did not exist for long after his arrival in the Colony. Moreover the jargon known as “pidgin English” is rapidly disappearing. It is confined to servants, many among whom now do not use it, to the poorer tradesmen, and to certain of the lowest grades. In fact, most intelligent Chinamen now designate it by a very contemptuous epithet, showing that they no longer look upon it as English. (ibid.: 375)

Although Stewart supported the Conference’s principal resolution, he ‘strongly opposed’ its decision to downgrade Chinese studies at the Central School, arguing – as he had repeatedly done in his reports – that proficiency in the mother tongue was not only desirable in terms of a student’s intellectual, social and cultural development, but was also a prerequisite for the acquisition of a foreign language. Regarding the plan to introduce English teaching in the vernacular schools, Stewart reported that his initial view was that it was ‘too bold an experiment’, but (he noted) this had been based on his (well founded) impression that the government intended to implement the scheme ‘immediately’ (ibid.: 380). However, upon learning of Eitel’s more cautious approach to implementation, Stewart gave the initiative his qualified support, but was nevertheless careful to stress that ‘the most modest expectations must be entertained of success and “English speaking” cannot be made the test of it for at least many years to come’ (ibid. 389).

Stewart’s second memorandum addressed further queries from the Colonial Office. Many of these concerned the issue of secular versus denominational education and are thus not relevant to our purpose. However, as we have seen, disputes over religion spilled over

into the sphere of language education, the most recent manifestation being Hutchinson's diatribe against the Central School. Stewart's response to Hutchinson's tirade is worth quoting as it indicates that critics ignored several important variables when comparing his school's English-language results with those of St Paul's:

There is no doubt that the best English scholars among the Chinese at present were educated at St Paul's College, but they were finishing their education at the time the Central School was being established, and they had all the practical advantages which sixteen or seventeen years of employment are calculated to confer. I do not think it is quite fair to compare men, whose children are now being educated at the Central School, with raw lads leaving the Central School without the long years of actual practice in English speaking and writing which those that are preferred to them have enjoyed. Again, this also has to be considered. Under Bishop Smith, for it was under him that the scholars referred to were educated, and not subsequently, the numbers were limited, and all were boarders, – two advantages which could not fail to tell enormously in favour of the scholars. (CO 129/186: 437)

5.2.4 The Colonial Office's rulings on the Education Conference's resolutions

Having considered all the evidence, Colonial Office officials drafted a despatch (7 February 1879) which presented the metropolitan government's verdict on the resolutions of the Education Conference. The despatch is significant because it represents Whitehall's first attempt to set out, 'authoritatively' and 'definitively', its position on language policy in Hong Kong education. Although Hicks Beach's despatch was apparently intended to end the controversy, in some respects it was as evasive as his initial response. This is particularly apparent in his 'ruling' on the Conference's principal resolution. It will be recalled that in his despatch of 14 May he had hesitated to state that English teaching should be the 'primary' object of government education since 'other matters' also deserved attention. However, instead of clarifying 'other matters', which might have entailed stating that Chinese education was equally important, Hicks Beach merely noted that he had expressed his views on this issue in his previous despatch. In other words, his supposedly

‘definitive’ despatch of 7 February is still remarkably vague on what constituted the fundamental objective of British policy in Hong Kong.

The Colonial Secretary’s rulings on the other resolutions reveal that Stewart had convinced Whitehall of the essential soundness of his ideas and methods. Indeed, he commenced his despatch by upbraiding Hennessy – in a typically circumlocutionary fashion – for ignoring Stewart’s advice: ‘... I cannot but feel that you have not been able to do yourself justice in being called upon to deal with the complicated problem of education without the advantage to be gained from his practical knowledge’ (ibid.: 449). While Hicks Beach and his officials appear to have been highly impressed by Stewart’s account of his work, in seeking to resolve the dispute they were also conscious of the traditional Colonial Office practice of supporting (as far as possible) the ‘man on the spot’. Whitehall officials were therefore torn between accepting the views of an exemplary professional and those of a man whom they knew to be a maverick, but who was nevertheless the Queen’s representative and thus deserving of their customary backing. This tension is particularly evident in Hicks Beach’s tentative ruling on the second resolution, which recommended raising the Central School’s entrance requirements in Chinese to allow more time for English studies:

I have felt some hesitation in according a sanction to the 2nd resolution in face of the strong arguments recorded by Mr Stewart against it, but I shall not withhold my approval if after perusing that gentleman’s reports, and on further consultation with him, you are still of the opinion that it should be carried out. (ibid. 455-456)

On the contentious third resolution, Hicks Beach – in an interesting and, for him, doubtless unrepeatable foray into the fields of first and second language acquisition – expressed support for Stewart’s views on the requisite time for Chinese studies and (particularly) for his approach to teaching English as a foreign language:

I consider that not less than four hours a day should be devoted to the study of Chinese for those who learn it and as regards the teaching of English I am obliged to say that Mr Stewart's account of the method of instruction which he employs has much impressed me, and that but for your representations I should have been prepared to express a clear preference for this method by which the pupil is taught the grammar and structure of the language and acquires a competent vocabulary, although he may not be able to speak the language while at school. It seems to me that the facility of speaking may be acquired afterwards, but if the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the grammatical structure of the language is not obtained during the time spent at school it is most unlikely that it will occur in after life. I do not therefore feel prepared to require that Mr Stewart shall abandon his present method against his own judgment although I should learn with satisfaction that he had been able to increase the English speaking of his pupils. (ibid.: 456-457)

However, Hicks Beach reluctantly approved the proposal to make Chinese optional, but couched his assent in terms which clearly reflected Stewart's concern about its potentially injurious effect on school discipline:

If it means that the alternative for learning Chinese is that the pupil is free to absent himself during those hours, this will require reconsideration as being obviously opposed to good discipline, but if the pupil is to employ the time in English or other subjects instead of Chinese I do not object if it can be effected without injury to the general organization of the classes. The change is no doubt a departure from the system recognised hitherto, namely, that the Government having approved a curriculum of lessons according to definite rules, the school admits all comers on equal terms and gives the same teaching to all alike; still if the studies can be so arranged without creating confusion in the arrangements of the classes I am quite willing that an option of this kind should be allowed for those scholars who have no occasion to learn Chinese. (ibid.: 458)

The Colonial Secretary gave his assent to the fourth and fifth resolutions, which sought to improve English teaching at the Central School through the provision of more teachers and increased accommodation, without recourse to the hedging that characterised his pronouncements about the respective status and roles of English and Chinese. Hicks Beach also expressed his unequivocal approval of the final resolution, which recommended the introduction of ELT in the vernacular schools. As we have already noted, this was arguably the Conference's most significant resolution since, apart from the short-lived Aberdeen

experiment, government-sponsored English teaching had hitherto been confined to the Central School. Although (as we have seen) the Colonial Office viewed the plan with some scepticism, it would appear that Eitel's climbdown and Stewart's tempered support eventually persuaded Hicks Beach to approve the initiative. The consequences of this decision will be examined in the next chapter.

Before we turn to the other significant feature of Hennessy's Governorship, the report of the Education Commission, it is worth briefly assessing the significance of the correspondence over the Conference's resolutions. In particular, what does this correspondence tell us about the British government's position on the teaching of English and Chinese in Hong Kong? In some respects, the course and outcome of the dispute over language policy in the late 1870s are similar to the more protracted controversy over Macaulay's Minute. As was the case in India, the starting point was an unequivocal statement advocating the wholesale promotion of English-language education (and, of necessity, the curtailment of native education), followed by a steady retreat towards a shadowy middle ground. During this retreat, which is prompted as much by parsimony as by principle, the British do not, however, entirely succeed in shaking off the impression that *au fond* they place a higher value on English than the vernacular. As Mayhew (1926: 27) observed of the 'zig-zag course' of British education in India: 'Our deference to oriental culture has never cleared us of the charge of trying to westernise the East nor removed the suspicion of our innate, though at times successfully concealed, conviction of the superiority of the West.' In both India and Hong Kong, the underlying British preference for English emerges more strongly in actual practice than in formal policy documents. Thus, Hicks Beach cannot bring himself to declare that English teaching should be the primary object of government education, despite its 'very great importance', but is nevertheless

prepared to sanction a series of practical measures, such as the recruitment of native-speaking teachers and the introduction of English teaching in the vernacular schools, which signalled that English teaching was the *de facto* if not the *de jure* object of colonial language policy.

5.3 The Education Commission (1880-1882)

5.3.1 The purpose of the Education Commission

The ostensible purpose of the Education Commission was to examine the advisability of raising the Central School to collegiate status. The evidence suggests, however, that its real purpose was to delay the construction of a new school building because Hennessy balked at the vast outlay the project involved. The Governor's motives in establishing the Commission were apparently widely understood, the *China Mail* (25 March 1881: 2) noting that 'many intelligent residents' of the colony had 'regarded the sitting and deliberation of such a body with an unsuppressed smile from the first'. His intentions were also plain to officials in the Colonial Office, as C.P. Lucas's minute reveals:

I have waded through the report of this drivelling Commission, and there is little to be said for it ... Now why was this Commission appointed? Nobody wanted it, the only requirement was a new Central School, the site for which was already bought before Sir J. Hennessy's arrival. The answer is that he objected to building the school ... After directing attention for some time from the Central School by quarrelling with the general system of education, as a final mode of obstruction he conceived the idea of converting the school into a collegiate institution, and the commission was appointed to enquire into this project – any one who cares to glance over the proceedings will see at once whether there was anything at all bona fide in it from first to last. (CO 129/203: 34-35)

Bona fide or not, the Commission's proceedings, which comprise verbatim reports of oral testimony given by educationalists, officials and merchants, provide important evidence of contemporary views on a range of issues related to the teaching of English and Chinese in

Hong Kong. This evidence is discussed below under four headings, which reflect central considerations of the present study.

5.3.2 The objectives of colonial language policy

The Commission's proceedings were dominated by the question that Hicks Beach had carefully evaded in his despatches of 14 May 1878 and 7 February 1879: What should be the primary object of government education in Hong Kong? It is interesting that the strongest advocates of an English-only policy were E.R. Belilios, a hard-nosed Indian businessman – 'I don't see why the English government should encumber itself with the teaching of Chinese' (Education Commission, 1882: 11) – and Ng Choy, who argued that the promotion of English was an imperial obligation:

... this is a British Colony, and I think English should be made a prominent part of the education given in Government schools, more prominent than Chinese, in order to educate the people to English customs and manners. If you give more prominence to Chinese, they will still think they are in a Chinese place. It being an English Government who is giving them the education, English ought to be made more prominent than Chinese. (ibid.: 124)

Most Britons who gave evidence to the Commission opposed the adoption of a wholly English-oriented policy on the grounds that it would deprive students of the right to study their own language and culture. When asked if Chinese should be removed from the Central School curriculum, Alexander Falconer replied that such a move 'would do a serious injury to the prospects of the boys in life' because 'there is a demand for boys who know both languages' (ibid.: 43). Falconer's views on the necessity for Chinese reflected an understandable teacherly concern for his pupils' welfare. As Stewart's deputy since 1874, and as a Chinese scholar of some repute, Falconer presumably shared his fellow Scot's belief in the intrinsic value of Chinese studies. However, it was left to two other participants

to spell out precisely why there were more than purely pragmatic justifications for the retention of Chinese. W.D. Hutchison, the Acting Fifth Master, argued that if students were not allowed to study Chinese

an alien race or pariah class will be created, who, misunderstanding and misunderstood by their fellow-countrymen, will have no sympathy with them and will become denationalised. We have not the shadow of a right to denationalise Chinese boys, by giving them a purely English education in order to serve our own narrow local ends by raising a class of men to occupy subordinate positions as copyists etc. in our Merchants' and Government offices. (ibid.: 13)

John Chalmers, an LMS missionary, believed that Hong Kong students 'should have as nearly as possible the same amount of Chinese knowledge which a fairly educated Chinaman has' (ibid.: 22). Like Hutchison, he felt that the adoption of an English-only policy would have harmful social and cultural consequences: '... the more you let Chinese slip away from their written language, the more they get degraded, and the more incompetent as Chinamen they will become' (ibid.: 33).

During the debate over the aims of colonial language policy, several participants referred to Macaulay's Minute and developments in Indian education. In view of our discussion in 2.1, it is interesting that interpretations of Macaulay's views were just as varied in nineteenth-century Hong Kong as they would be in twentieth-century academia. According to Eitel, education in Hong Kong in 1882 was at a similar stage to that in India before 1835:

Before Macaulay's time in India things were pretty much the same as they are now in Hong Kong with regard to education. Macaulay was the first who introduced into India the present educational system, urging that the Government should devote its money, energy, and time to promote a knowledge of English. (ibid.: 35)

Eitel thus appears to have regarded Macaulay's Minute as a blueprint for an English-only policy. As we have seen, such an interpretation continues to find expression in modern

critiques of colonial language policy (e.g. Phillipson, 1992). Stewart, however, was quick to point out that there was an oft-forgotten vernacular element in Macaulay's position on language education (and one which corresponded to his own beliefs on the necessity for mother-tongue education): 'Macaulay holds it as one of the first principles of education, that a boy who does not know his own language is not educated at all' (ibid.: 35). To illustrate the divergent interpretations of Macaulay's Minute that existed in Hong Kong at this time, it is instructive to quote Bateson Wright's account of the language controversy during Hennessy's Governorship. Wright, who participated in the Commission's hearings (having arrived in 1881), wrote these words towards the end of a long career as Headmaster of Queen's College:

Under Sir J. Pope-Hennessy's regime (1877-82) it was first suggested that the entire time of Chinese students ought to be devoted to the acquisition of the English language. The supporters of the then existing state of affairs appealed successfully to the famous dictum of Macaulay relative to the maintenance of vernacular instruction in India. (Bateson Wright, 1908: 121)

Wright's testimony is interesting because it indicates that, rather than being used to support an English-only policy, the Minute was in fact used to justify the continued teaching of Chinese.

5.3.3 The problem of Anglo-Chinese education

Most participants in the Education Commission – who, it must be emphasised, were hardly representative of Chinese or European opinion – favoured a combination of English and Chinese teaching in the government schools. The testimony of F.B. Johnson, a Legislative Councillor, encapsulated the views of many attendees:

... the education the Government should give in its public schools should be a mixed education of Chinese and English in the lower classes and that after the scholars have arrived at a certain proficiency, they should receive an English education in the higher classes, with as much knowledge of science generally as can be given. (ibid.: 123)

Despite this broad support for Anglo-Chinese education, a recurring complaint among participants was that mixed-medium teaching (of the kind practised at Stewart's Central School) failed to produce graduates with high levels of proficiency in both English and Chinese. Like their counterparts in modern Hong Kong, students in the late nineteenth century tended to fall between two stools. A.J. May, Acting Third Master and a former Head of St Paul's College, observed that six years' experience in Hong Kong had convinced him that 'both the English and Chinese languages cannot be sufficiently taught in one and the same institution and at one and the same time, to make either the one or the other profitable as far as practical results are concerned' (ibid.: 9). Ng Choy also drew attention to the problem of Anglo-Chinese education:

I think it taxes a boy too much to study two languages at the same time so very difficult as English and Chinese. He must pay too much attention to one subject in preference to the other. He could not study efficiently both at the same school. (ibid.: 98).

To ensure effective language learning, he argued that 'the whole attention of the boys at the Central School should be confined to the study of English, and that every Chinese boy before admission thereto should be found to possess a competent knowledge of his own language' (ibid.: viii). In highlighting the problems of dual-language education, Ng Choy

was echoing the views of the new Inspector of Schools, E.J. Eitel, who at speech day for the government district schools claimed that

when both English and Chinese are taught side by side, the results are poor with the best teachers, and that when English is taught in a school to the exclusion of Chinese, or Chinese is taught to the exclusion of English, the results are fairly proportionate to the efficiency of the teacher. In other words, when both the English and Chinese languages are taught side by side in the same class, the children learn neither English properly nor Chinese satisfactorily. (*CM*, 6 February 1880: 3)

Eitel further argued that students in the district schools should be allowed to devote their energies solely to English:

... they are all or nearly all born here and therefore British subjects; their own interests as well as the interests of the Government dictate that they should learn English, and they might learn it, one and all, in six years tolerably well, if their time and strength were not wasted on the bootless attempt to learn the two languages at the same time. (*ibid.*: 3)

5.3.4 The mission of the Central School

Another issue that was raised at the Commission's hearings concerned the mission of the Central School. On the evidence of his report (as Acting Head), Falconer was not wholly clear about the purpose of an institution that he had faithfully served since 1869: 'As far as I have been able to gather, the Central School was established for the purpose of giving Chinese lads, dwelling in Hong Kong, an opportunity of acquiring an English education in addition to the usual branches of a Chinese education' (*ibid.* 2). His new superior, Wright, giving testimony on 27 July 1882, was able to offer a more specific, economic rationale: 'I thought one of the objects of the school was to train Chinese to know sufficient English to be useful in the Government offices and so on' (*ibid.*: 104). In suggesting that the Central School was (partly) intended to serve the needs of government and business, the new Head was echoing the views of Hennessy (see 5.1.5) and Eitel (see 5.1.3), and also, to some

extent, those of the man who nominated him for the post, James Legge. Similarly, A.J. May argued that the kind of education that Hong Kong needed was one that ‘teaches the boys to be of use in Government offices and mercantile offices’ rather than higher education of the sort offered in a collegiate institution (ibid.: 95).

As discussed in 4.2.3, one of Legge’s motives in establishing the Central School was the promotion of enlightenment among the Chinese. Several participants saw this as an important objective of the school. Belilios, for example, argued that ‘the English government should teach English, because the English language can teach sciences and enable the Chinese to become better informed than they are at present’ (ibid.: 34). The testimony of other informants, however, reveals that the European desire to promote enlightenment, through the dissemination of Western knowledge and ideas, was not always a disinterested or altruistic one. Hutchison, for example, stated that – ‘So far as I have been able to learn’ [again, evidence of uncertainty over its mission] – the Central School was ‘primarily’ intended

To afford Chinese youths in the South of China, the means of obtaining a liberal Western education. It was hoped, that if the Chinese availed themselves of these means, gradually, great changes would be effected in the national character of the Chinese, which would finally result in the opening up of the Chinese Empire to free intercourse with other nations. (ibid.: 13)

Hutchison claimed that Central School graduates were already making their presence felt in China: ‘... their influence like that of a stone cast into a pond spreads and widens and will do so, until the whole people are affected’ (ibid.: 23).

Despite the belief among some participants that the Central School existed to serve British interests (directly or indirectly), this conception of its mission did not apparently occur to everyone. In the following exchange, for example, Bishop Burdon is somewhat taken aback by Eitel’s suggestion that the government might have other than purely

educational motives in operating the Central School. Burdon's initial response was prompted by a question from Eitel on whether the school's teaching had a 'moral effect' on the Chinese.

BURDON: To serve what?

EITEL: The English Government.

BURDON: The English Government?

EITEL: The English Government must have a certain object in view in spending so much money. I presume it is not simply to teach the Chinese to read and write, but to make them better men, to keep them from crime.

BURDON: I don't think the boys at the Central School are brought there in order that they may turn out good citizens of the English Government. They simply go because the Chinese universally believe in education. The most of them like to study English, because it fits them to gain a better living. (ibid.: 15)

5.3.5 The teaching and learning of English

As noted above, Falconer believed that the Central School had been established to give Chinese students the opportunity to acquire 'an English education' (in addition to 'a Chinese education'). Like other nineteenth-century colonial educators, when Falconer talked of 'an English education' he meant an education that was essentially the same as that practised in elementary schools in England. The adjective 'English' thus refers to 'England' rather than the language. It will be recalled that the Education Conference had resolved that 'the teaching of English' should be the government's primary object. It will also be recalled that Hicks Beach had declared that 'a proper teaching of the English language' was of great importance in Hong Kong. Despite the colonial and metropolitan governments' preoccupation with 'English teaching', it was not clear whether this referred to the teaching of content subjects through the medium of English (EMI) or the teaching of English as a language subject (ELT). It will be noted that the abbreviations EMI and ELT are used to refer to these two (now) distinct approaches to the acquisition or learning of English. In a

sense, the application of these modern abbreviations to nineteenth-century colonial education is misleading because (as used in post-colonial Hong Kong) both denote the teaching of English as a second or foreign language using materials and approaches that are specifically designed for non-native speakers of English. This was not the case during the period under consideration. As Eitel noted in his first report, the Central School was ‘taught too much like an English school for English boys, in comparative disregard of the fact that the majority of the boys neither speak English nor hear English spoken outside the school’ (*HKGG*, 2 April 1879: 161). When we use EMI and ELT in relation to the 1842-1913 period we therefore really mean the teaching of English using the content and methods of education employed in schools in Victorian/Edwardian England, although it is of course likely that many teachers in Hong Kong adapted their teaching in an effort to make ‘English education’ comprehensible, useful and even interesting for Chinese students. Evidence for this appears in Falconer’s account of the ‘system’ adopted at the Central School. Rather than ‘adhere rigidly to a hard and fast system’, which might be equated with full-scale ‘English education’, Falconer reported that he and his colleagues tended to ‘feel our way’ and ‘adapt to circumstances’ (*ibid.*: 3). One method that Chinese and European teachers employed to adapt English education to the circumstances of Hong Kong was to explain English-language materials in Cantonese. As Stewart admitted, mixed-mode instruction was standard practice at the flagship school: ‘It has been the rule that every sentence read should be explained in Chinese; that has been the invariable practice in the Central School’ (*ibid.*: 13).

One of the most interesting features of the Commission’s proceedings is the debate over whether EMI or ELT should be the focus of government education. In his oral evidence to the commissioners, W.B.M. Arthur (Acting Second Master) claimed that most

Central School students wanted ELT rather than EMI: ‘A great many of the boys would give up chemistry and the mathematical subjects for the sake of getting more teaching in the English language – English composition and English speaking’ (ibid.: 76). Arthur’s observation prompted F.B. Johnson to seek clarification:

JOHNSON: Is the chief desire of these men of whom you speak to learn English or science?

ARTHUR: English.

JOHNSON: Instruction in English as apart from education?

ARTHUR: Yes.

In his written submission, Arthur argued that if the school concentrated on ELT it would not only be ‘consonant with the wishes of many of the parents’, but would also result in a ‘marked increase in the number of boys better able to speak and write in English than at present’ (ibid.: 6). Arthur’s colleague, A.J. May, believed that the Central School should focus on subjects such as book-keeping and letter writing which were relevant to students’ future workplace needs. He therefore recommended that the school divest itself of the ‘higher branches of education’ such as Euclid and Algebra (ibid.: 11).

This was all too much for Stewart. He had not come to Hong Kong as an English language instructor; he had a ‘higher duty to discharge’, something beyond ‘mere parrot-work’:

I looked upon my business as that of an educationist not an instructor. I was to give an education, and it occurred to me it would be impossible to do that, unless the boys had a proper knowledge of their own language. If I had come out merely as an instructor, that would have been a different thing. There are many things that enter into an education that are almost useless practically, but still as a mental training are very valuable, and it is possible this is at the root of a great many difficulties about education. One is thinking about actual results while another is thinking of the mental training that may be given, and according to your different view you will adopt a different method. If the object of the Central School is simply to teach English, I say abolish everything but that, but if the Government considers it its duty to give an education, to educate the various faculties of the boys’ minds, it will be necessary to teach subjects not of practical use in after life. (ibid.: 82)

The truth is, though, that Stewart's pupils wanted 'actual results' rather than 'mental training'; like most other colonial students, they wanted ELT rather than EMI; more than anything – and, to the informed modern reader, this is the unmistakable message of the Commission's proceedings – what they wanted, or rather needed, was effective 'instruction' in English as a foreign language combined with, though in subordination to, a sound 'education' in Chinese.

This, though, was not the conclusion of the Education Commission or the Colonial Office. In a letter to the Secretary of State (3 March 1882), F.B. Johnson complained that 'the whole educational system of the Colony has been thrown into confusion during the last five years' (CO 129/199: 90). The Central School had been 'discredited in the eyes of the Chinese', while its masters had been 'discouraged' by the 'various crude and impracticable suggestions' which had been made for its reform, and by 'the tone of disparagement of and dissatisfaction with its educational system' which had characterised Hennessy's public addresses (*ibid.*: 90-91). Whitehall had also grown weary of the disputes and deliberations over language policy. 'The first thing and the main thing to be done,' minuted C.P. Lucas after reading the Commission's report, 'is to build a new Central School: after it has been built the other requirements can be taken in hand. In short we wish to revert exactly to the point reached when Sir J. Hennessy went to Hong Kong' (CO 129/203: 37). There was no turning back, however; Hennessy's Governorship had witnessed the beginnings of a shift towards an English-oriented policy, one that was to gain in momentum in the final decades of the nineteenth century, as the next chapter reveals.

Chapter Six

The spread of English-language education in Hong Kong (1883-1913)

This chapter examines the causes and consequences of the spread of English-language education in the three decades between the publication of the Education Commission's report and the enactment of the Education Ordinance. As described in 6.1, this period witnessed a significant increase in enrolments in the Anglo-Chinese and English streams in the government and government-aided sectors of the colony's education system. The British regime's motives in promoting the study and use of English in Hong Kong during this period are explored in 6.2. As in the modern era, the expansion of English-medium education in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was accompanied by a host of problems relating to the teaching and learning of English. These problems are analysed in 6.3. The final section assesses the colonial government's attempts to address these problems during the early years of the twentieth century.

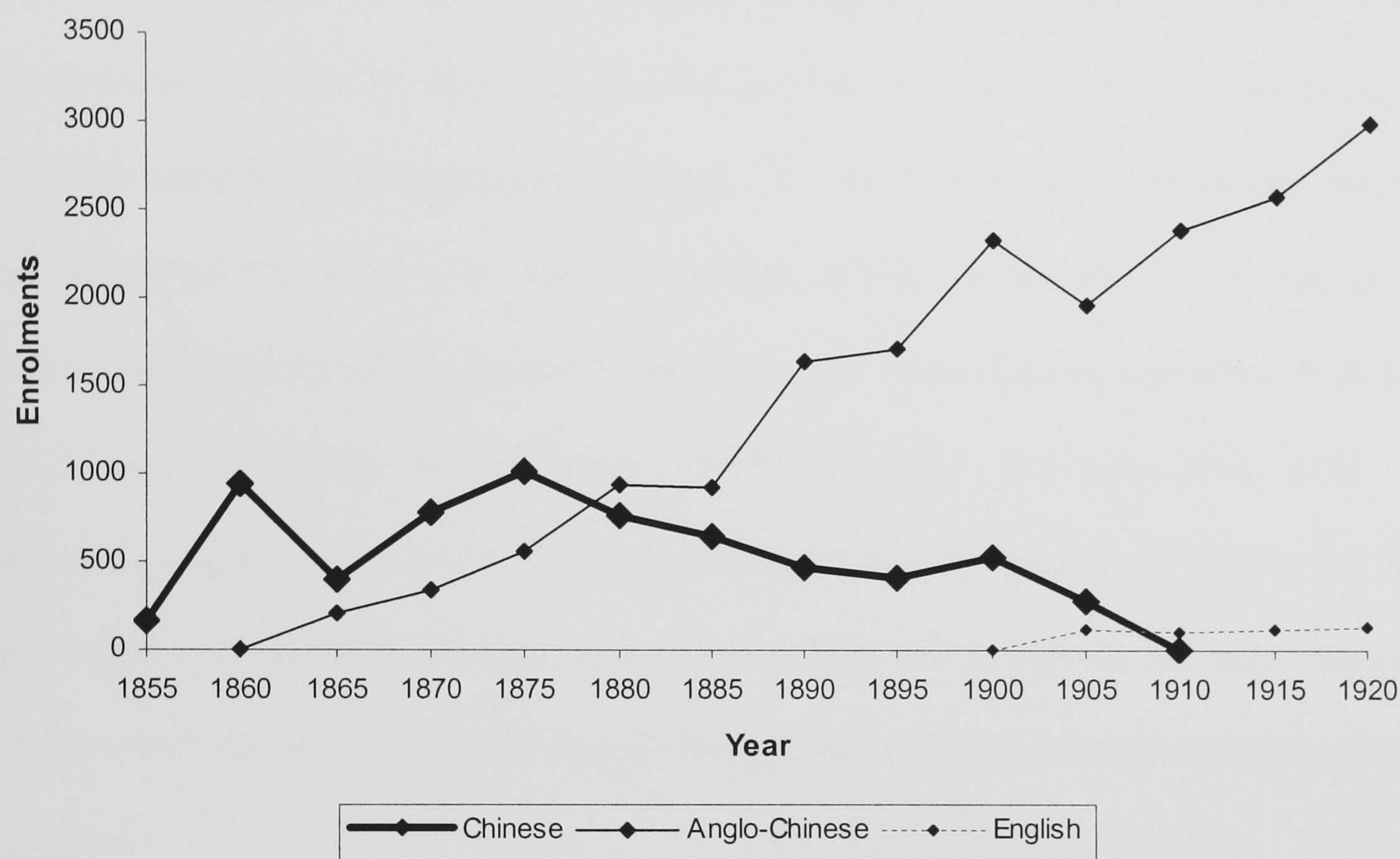
6.1 Trends in English and Chinese education

6.1.1 The emergence of an English-oriented policy in government education

We have already observed that British attitudes towards the study and use of English in the Empire are perhaps best gauged by examining language policies and practices in the schools directly controlled by the government. It would therefore be illuminating to analyse language-related trends in the government sector of Hong Kong's education system during the period under consideration. Figure 2 presents information about enrolments in the government Anglo-Chinese, Chinese and English schools between 1855 and 1920. Figure 2

thus not only allows us to view developments in English and vernacular education during the thirty-year period examined in this chapter, but also enables us to see these trends in relation to the entire period covered by the present study (and indeed slightly beyond).

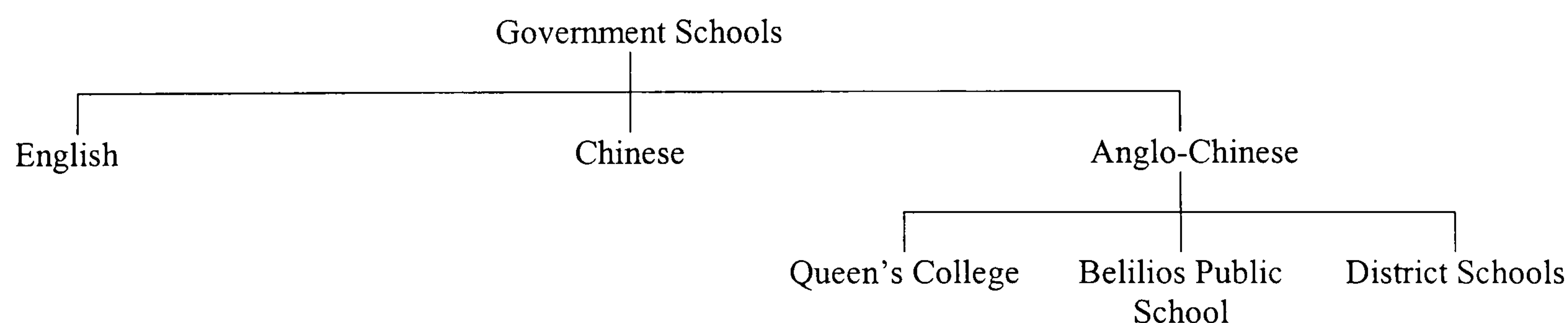
Figure 2 Enrolments in the government schools by stream (1855-1920).



Before we discuss Figure 2, it would be as well to offer a word of caution about the accuracy of the figures and the precision of the classifications. The data in Figure 2 were collated from enrolment statistics presented in the government’s education reports. Since these figures are based on maximum annual enrolments, they undoubtedly overestimate the number of students attending the three categories of school in the years between 1855 and 1920. The category ‘maximum’ enrolments was used because this set of data was reported throughout this period (unlike the presumably more reliable ‘average’ enrolments category, which does not appear in the early reports). The figures reported in the first three decades should be treated with particular caution. Stewart’s annual reports contain numerous

instances of teachers in the vernacular schools falsifying their attendance records. Since their salaries were linked to attendance, teachers were understandably prone to exaggerate the number of pupils on their rolls. The figures for the Anglo-Chinese stream are likely to be slightly more reliable as government inspectors were able to exercise close supervision over the schools in this stream, which was dominated by the Central School and its later incarnations Victoria College and Queen's College. It is worth noting, however, that students tended to leave the flagship school as soon as they had acquired the minimum level of English required for employment purposes. To the frustration of its headmasters, few boys completed the seven-year course of studies offered at the school. As late as 1905, Wright complained about the 'tendency on the part of some Chinese parents and guardians to treat Queen's College as if it were a hotel' (*HKGG*, 3 February 1905: 112). When interpreting Figure 2 we should therefore remember that the enrolment figures are higher than is likely to have been the case and also that they fail to capture the high turnover of students which schools in both the Anglo-Chinese and Chinese streams experienced during this period.

Figure 3 The structure of government education in the early twentieth century.



The second area of doubt concerns the classification of schools. By the close of our period, schools in the government sector fell into three categories according to medium of instruction: English, Chinese and Anglo-Chinese (Figure 3). The first two categories are

unproblematic: schools classed as English were intended exclusively for British children, while those termed Chinese provided a purely vernacular education for the colony's Chinese community. The main source of difficulty is the Anglo-Chinese stream. By the turn of the century, this comprised Queen's College, Belilios Public School, which was established in 1890 for Chinese and Eurasian girls, and four district schools, which sprang up during the 1880s in consequence of Hennessy's pro-English language policy. In Figure 2, the line representing the Anglo-Chinese stream is derived from the combined enrolments of Queen's College, Belilios Public School and the district schools. This is not entirely satisfactory as it would probably be more accurate to characterise Queen's and Belilios Public School as English rather than Anglo-Chinese schools (since neither devoted much time to Chinese studies). The district schools, which acted as feeders to Queen's, might be regarded as genuine Anglo-Chinese schools since they apparently provided a mixture of English and Chinese teaching (though not necessarily in equal measures). When analysing enrolments in the Anglo-Chinese stream we should therefore remember that the various institutions classified here as Anglo-Chinese were by no means homogeneous in terms of curriculum or level. The one characteristic which these schools did share, however, was that they provided Chinese students with English-language education. This is an important consideration because our study is primarily concerned with British policies towards the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language. Though admittedly somewhat crude and arbitrary, combining enrolments from the three categories of Anglo-Chinese school allows us to determine the approximate number of Chinese pupils who were studying English during the period under review, and (more importantly) to measure the relative strengths of the Anglo-Chinese and Chinese streams, which is essential if we are to understand where the colonial regime's priorities lay.

Figure 2 reveals that the Hong Kong government's initial priorities lay in the field of vernacular education, although it is worth noting that some pupils attending Chinese schools in 1855 and 1860 were also receiving rudimentary instruction in English (see 3.4.3). As the figures for 1865 reveal, the establishment of the Central School (1862) led to a sharp decline in enrolments in the Chinese schools (as indeed was inevitable since it grew out of five existing native schools). In the following decade, however, enrolments in the Chinese stream rose quite steadily, significantly outstripping those in the Anglo-Chinese stream, which during this period consisted solely of the Central School. Viewed from the broad perspective of Hong Kong's colonial history, the years between 1855 and 1875 represent the high water mark of direct government involvement in vernacular education, for not only did enrolments in the Chinese stream exceed those in the Anglo-Chinese stream, it should also be remembered that the Central School's bifurcated curriculum allowed equal space for English and Chinese studies.

Figure 2 reveals that a decisive shift towards an English-oriented policy took place during the 1880s. In 1880, enrolments in the Anglo-Chinese stream were slightly higher than those in the Chinese stream (939 as against 770); by the end of the decade, however, the respective figures stood at 1,652 and 466. Thereafter, the Anglo-Chinese stream continued its steady expansion (with occasional periods of fluctuation) while the Chinese stream stagnated for some years before entering a period of terminal decline. As we can see, by 1910 the colonial government had withdrawn completely from the field of vernacular education. By the close of our period, then, the public sector of Hong Kong's education system comprised a sizeable and still growing Anglo-Chinese stream and a small but disproportionately expensive English stream.

How do we explain these developments? Why did the Anglo-Chinese stream begin to flow ever more rapidly in the years between 1885 and 1910, and why, during the same period, did the Chinese stream become a trickle and eventually run dry? In essence, the rise of Anglo-Chinese schooling stemmed from the colonial regime's adoption of a clear and deliberate policy to promote the study and use of English in Hong Kong. During this period, English thus became the *de jure* as well as the *de facto* object of language policy in government education. The British administration's motives in promoting English will be discussed in 6.2; here we will confine ourselves to the means by which the government expanded English-language provision in the schools under its auspices. The rapid increase in Anglo-Chinese enrolments can be attributed to two main factors: the opening of Victoria College and the introduction of English teaching in a number of district schools.

The removal of the government flagship to a new, more commodious building in 1889 was undoubtedly the most significant factor. The old Central School building was able to accommodate only around 400 students; in contrast, Victoria College had room for over 900 students. The impact of the new building on enrolments is immediately evident in the sharp upsurge in the Anglo-Chinese stream between 1885 and 1890 (Figure 2).

The second reason for the growth in Anglo-Chinese enrolments was the gradual introduction (commencing in 1878) of English-language education in some of the district schools. This was a direct consequence what the *China Mail* termed Hennessy's 'bloodless struggle' to induce the Chinese 'to dabble a little more deeply in the "heathen" tongue' (*CM*, 17 January 1879: 2). The Governor's instrumental role in extending the scope of English-language provision is reflected in Eitel's education report for 1878:

The feature of the year, in educational respects, was certainly the great impetus given to the study of English. The warmth with which His Excellency the Governor, on all possible occasions, advocated the promotion of a knowledge of the English language and of English speaking among the

native population of Hongkong, naturally bore its fruit. (*HKGG*, 2 April 1879: 158)

In Eitel's view, the most notable manifestation of Hennessy's Anglicist policy was the introduction of English teaching in Wong-nai-chung, Wanchai and Sai-ying-pun:

That the inhabitants of a small hamlet like Wong-nai-chung should volunteer to contribute \$5 per month towards the expenses of the school, hitherto entirely defrayed by the Government, and that they should stipulate that English as well as Chinese be taught in the school, is a most remarkable fact ... (ibid.: 158)

The schools in Wanchai and Sai-ying-pun, which lay respectively on the eastern and western fringes of Hong Kong's central business district, appear from the outset to have been especially popular. In 1890, for example, Eitel reported that the two schools were 'besieged at the beginning of every school year with numbers of applicants who have to be turned away for want of accommodation' (*HKGG*, 5 July 1890: 634). It appears, however, that English teaching was much less in demand outside the urban areas. The opening of Anglo-Chinese schools in several of the larger villages on the Island (Shaukiwan, Stanley) and in Kowloon (Yaumati) in the late nineteenth century met with mixed success. In his report for 1888, Eitel noted that the Yaumati school 'continues, year by year, to drag on a sluggish existence, there being among the villagers still very little appreciation of an English education' (*HKGG*, 30 March 1889: 247). In his report the year before, Eitel had observed that

The mass of the Chinese lower classes do not yet sufficiently appreciate an English education, because their necessities demand Chinese rather than English knowledge. But the well-to-do classes of the Chinese community are now from year to year becoming more alive to the advantages of an English education ... (*HKGG*, 21 April 1888: 403)

By 'well-to-do classes', Eitel probably had in mind the petty bourgeoisie that had emerged in urban Hong Kong since the mid-1850s rather than the business and professional elite (cf. J.J. Francis in 5.1.3). According to the Committee on Education (1902: 494), most

pupils who attended the Anglo-Chinese district schools were ‘the sons of small shopkeepers’. This evidence tends to accord with Alexander Falconer’s testimony to the Education Commission twenty years before. When asked about the class of student who attended the Central School, Falconer replied that ‘70% or 80% are dependent in some way on the foreign trade’ (Education Commission, 1882: 57). ‘In my walks,’ he continued, ‘I find one of my boys in nearly every shop in the central part of the town’ (ibid.: 58). The evidence therefore suggests that the demand for English-language education was confined to Victoria and its environs, and sprang principally from a class of Chinese whose business interests were tied in some way to the foreign trade. Indeed, it would appear that demand for English was intimately connected to the colony’s economic fortunes. In his report on Victoria College for 1893, Wright discussed the effect on enrolments of the recession which Hong Kong was then experiencing: ‘If there is not a steady annually increasing demand for English-speaking clerks, if new hong, factories, and enterprises of all sorts do not arise; we must not be surprised at a stagnation, nor even at an ebb, in the influx of Chinese pupils’ (HKGG, 10 March 1894: 119).

The expansion of the government Anglo-Chinese stream in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was therefore an inevitable corollary of the regime’s adoption of an English-oriented language policy. The decline of the Chinese stream during the same period was also the result of a conscious decision – or rather series of decisions, since the policy evolved gradually – to end direct government involvement in vernacular education. Eitel’s programme of school closures during the 1890s – in 1893 alone he shut down eleven ‘badly attended’ Chinese schools – and the complete abandonment of native education in the early twentieth century might with reason be held up as evidence of a ‘linguicist’ colonial regime ‘slamming the door on indigenous traditions of learning’. While such an

assessment contains an element of truth, it is not the whole truth, for as discussed below, the administration's policy to withdraw from the field of vernacular education was premised on the assumption that the mission schools, once in receipt of public funding, would take up the burden of provision.

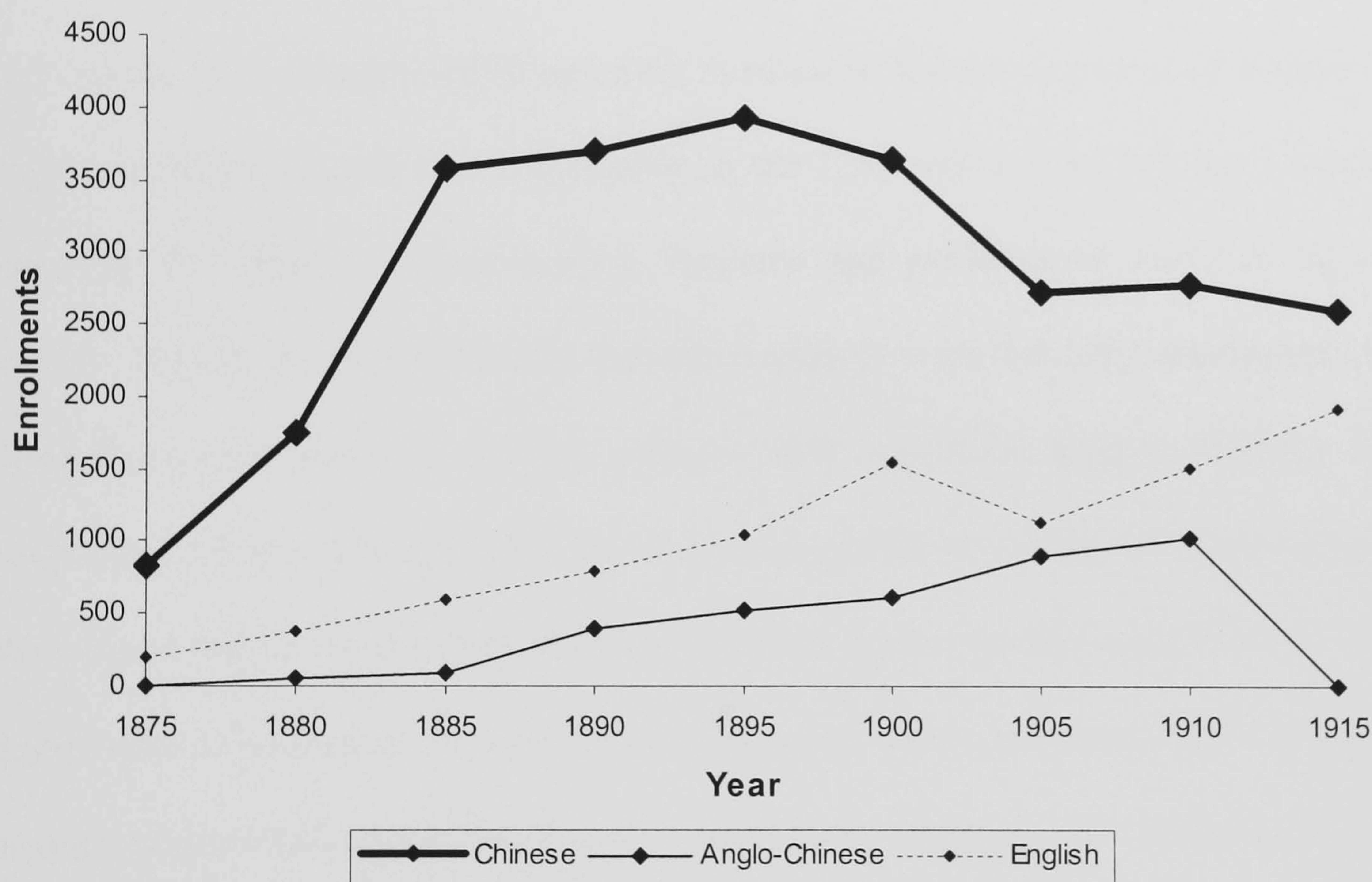
6.1.2 The expansion of vernacular education in the government-aided sector

As with the English-oriented policy in government education, the origins of the plan to shift responsibility for Chinese education from the public to the aided sector can be traced to changes instituted during Hennessy's Governorship. The crucial development here was the revision of Stewart's controversial grant-in-aid scheme in 1879. We need not concern ourselves with the details; for our purposes, the essential point is that the Revised Code finally put to rest the 'religious question', and enabled the missionary societies to accept government aid on the same 'payment by results' principle that operated in Britain and elsewhere in the Empire.

The impact of the Revised Code is immediately evident if we examine enrolments in the Chinese stream between 1875 and 1900. As Figure 4 reveals, the number of pupils receiving elementary vernacular education in the mission schools rose sharply during this period, and particularly during the first five years of the scheme's operation (1880-1885). Although enrolments in the Chinese stream declined somewhat in the early twentieth century, even at this stage, when the British were apparently gripped by the anglicising impulse, the vernacular schools continued to enjoy numerical ascendancy in the government-aided sector. The data in Figure 4 thus provide clear evidence that the colonial regime's policy of closing its Chinese schools was undertaken in the knowledge that the missions, and particularly the British Protestant societies, were prepared to assume

responsibility for the provision of vernacular education. It would be misleading, therefore, to argue that the government's adoption of an English-oriented policy in the years after 1878 meant that native pupils were denied the opportunity to receive a Chinese education (albeit one with a Christian twist). The British, in their imperial pomp, may not have placed as much value on vernacular education as on English education (see 6.1.3), but they were nevertheless careful to ensure that the colonial school system offered scope for those who did not need or want to study English.

Figure 4 Enrolments in the government-aided schools by stream (1875-1915).



As can be seen from Figure 4, the revision of the grant-in-aid scheme also led to a steady increase in enrolments in the English and Anglo-Chinese streams in the years before 1915. Schools classified as English provided a Western education through the medium of English. In terms of the content and methods of instruction these institutions were similar to

the two small English schools set up by the government in the aftermath of the Committee on Education's report. In one important respect, however, the English schools run by the missions were different from those in the government sector: whereas the latter were reserved for the children of British residents, the former were attended by a mixture of European, Eurasian and Chinese pupils. It is worth noting that most English 'grant' schools were originally intended for Europeans and Eurasians, but over the years they appear to have been 'infiltrated' by Chinese students in search of effective instruction in English (cf. St Andrew's School in 3.2.2).

Although the impact of the 1879 Revised Code was felt most strongly in the field of vernacular education, its influence on English and Anglo-Chinese education should not be overlooked, for it contributed in no small measure to the development of a select group of English-medium schools that (together with the University) were to play a major role in nurturing the colony's administrative, business and professional elites in the twentieth century. Indeed, it may be the case that these schools were the only institutions in colonial Hong Kong that provided Chinese students with a genuine English-medium immersion programme (Evans, 2002) (and in this respect it should be noted that some were boarding schools and thus offered an optimum environment for the natural acquisition of English). It is important to emphasise, however, that these schools were not intended for Chinese pupils. It must be assumed, therefore, that the curriculum, materials and methods of instruction were not adapted to the needs of second-language learners. This does not appear to have troubled the Chinese, who, by the close of our period, already perceived that the quality of English-language education offered in the grant schools exceeded that of the government Anglo-Chinese schools (whose curricula were equally ill-adapted to the needs of second-language learners even though they had been established primarily for Chinese students).

The evidence suggests that the missions preferred to establish English rather than Anglo-Chinese schools. (Bearing in mind our discussion in 2.4, it is interesting that Catholic missions from France and Italy were the most zealous promoters of English education in colonial Hong Kong whereas the British societies, as noted above, tended to concentrate on vernacular education.) In some respects, the category 'Anglo-Chinese' is even more slippery when applied to the aided sector than it is to the government sector. It is likely that schools classified as Anglo-Chinese in Figure 4 bore many of the hallmarks of schools in the English stream. The essential similarity of the education offered by the English and Anglo-Chinese schools is indicated by the apparent collapse of the Anglo-Chinese stream between 1910 and 1915. It should immediately be pointed out that its sudden demise does not signify that schools offering Anglo-Chinese teaching ceased to be popular or to receive government funding; rather, what appears to have happened is that they were reclassified as English schools. The enrolment figures for the English stream in 1915 thus comprise the existing English schools and the schools previously classified as Anglo-Chinese. The apparent ease with which the authorities were able to collapse the two categories of school suggests that such curricula differences as existed between the English and Anglo-Chinese schools during our period were not fundamental.

6.1.3 Language policy in the colonial education system

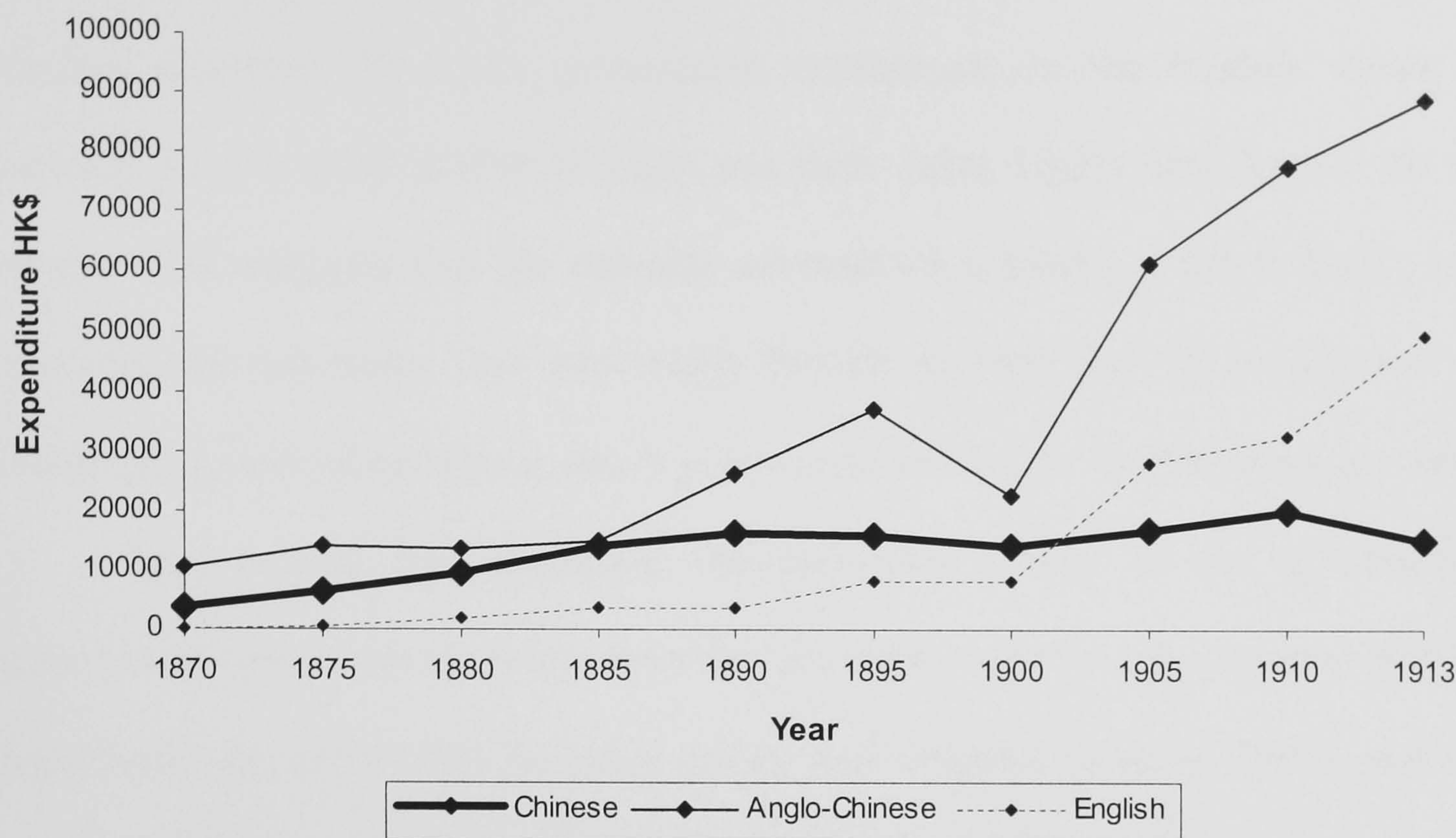
Thus far we have examined language-based trends in the government-controlled and government-supervised sectors of Hong Kong's education system. There are good reasons for treating the two sectors separately since they sprang from different sources and developed at different rates in response to different demands. In one important respect, however, they were similar and this was their Western management. Both categories of school owed their existence to British colonialism, and for this reason it may be helpful to regard the government and mission schools as two branches of the colonial education system (cf. 4.3.2).

Taken together, Figures 2 and 4 provide an important corrective to two influential accounts of language policy in British colonial education: Phillipson's (1992) claim that the British imposed the English language on their African and Asian subjects, and in the process rode roughshod over the vernacular languages, and Pennycook's (2002a,b) view that, more often than not, the British sought to accomplish their imperial objectives by 'playing safe', that is, by promoting vernacular education and restricting access to English. The enrolment data in Figures 2 and 4 provide little support for the view that language policy in the Empire was a one-way street signposted either English or vernacular. As is immediately evident, the colonial education system in Hong Kong between 1875 and 1915 provided opportunities for native students to attend Chinese schools (where no English was taught), English schools (where no Chinese was taught) or Anglo-Chinese schools (where both languages were taught, though not necessarily in equal amounts). The evidence suggests that the majority of students opted to attend vernacular schools (especially in the last quarter of the nineteenth century), but as we can see both the English and Anglo-Chinese streams grew steadily in popularity throughout the period under review.

Although language-based enrolment data offer a useful corrective to simplistic or unfounded accounts of colonial policy, they do not necessarily tell the whole story. They provide some evidence of the relative popularity of the different types of schools operating within the colonial education system, but what they are unable fully to reveal is where the British authorities' language priorities lay. Although most students in the colonial education system attended Chinese schools, this does not necessarily mean that the British attached more importance to vernacular education than to Anglo-Chinese or English education. One way of determining the colonial regime's priorities is to examine its funding policies towards the Chinese, Anglo-Chinese and English streams during this period.

Figure 5 details public spending on the three categories of school between 1870 and 1913 in the government and government-aided sectors. This information was collated from expenditure records appended to the reports of the Inspectors of Schools during this period. In the case of the government sector, this was money the administration allocated directly to the schools under its auspices (mainly in the form of teachers' salaries); in the case of the aided sector, this came in the form of grants to schools on the basis of their pupils' examination results.

Figure 5 Expenditure in the government and aided sectors by stream (1870-1913).



If we accept the premise that funding policies are the most revealing indicator of government priorities, it is clear from Figure 5 that the British attached more importance to Anglo-Chinese and English education than to vernacular education throughout this period, even during the 1870s when the status of English as the *de jure* object of colonial language policy had yet to be formalised. Although the primacy of English in the government sector was established during the 1880s, the evidence suggests that it was not until the first decade of the twentieth century that the colonial regime's Anglicist language policy was fully implemented. As we can see, public spending on Anglo-Chinese and English schooling rose significantly after the turn of the century (in consequence of the Committee on Education's proposals), while funding for vernacular education remained constant (as indeed it had since the mid-1880s). Although by the close of our period enrolments in the Anglo-Chinese and Chinese schools were at similar levels (that is, if we combine enrolments in the two sectors), in terms of funding there was a marked disparity between the two streams, for as Figure 5

reveals, spending on Anglo-Chinese education was nine times higher than that on vernacular education. This period also witnessed a significant increase in funding for English education. By 1913, government expenditure on the English stream (which included its two small British schools) was three times higher than that on the Chinese stream. This suggests that the colonial administration placed a much higher value on education for non-native (and particularly British) students than for its Chinese subjects (although, as pointed out above, native pupils also attended the English mission schools).

This section has examined language-based trends in the government and government-aided schools. When assessing the impact of colonial education policies, and particularly the notion that language policy was designed to serve British political and economic interests, it is important to note that another category of school existed in Hong Kong during this period: this was the private school. These schools operated entirely beyond the purview of the colonial regime. Since the private schools were free from government control or influence, information about the nature and extent of provision is somewhat sketchy. (Before the enactment of the 1913 Education Ordinance, which gave the authorities supervisory powers over the private sector, government reports dealt only with schools in the public and aided sectors.) There is some evidence, however, that the private schools more than held their own against their counterparts in the government-aided sector. In 1902, for example, the Committee on Education (1902: 497) estimated that 2,457 pupils were attending private Chinese schools compared with 1,926 in the mission schools. The Committee also reported that enrolments in the private Anglo-Chinese stream were higher than those in the aided sector (526 against 435). (It was unable to estimate enrolments in the private English stream.)

The growth of private Anglo-Chinese schooling (and of other forms of unregulated English teaching) in the late nineteenth century appears to have been closely linked to the adoption of an English-oriented policy in the government sector. In his report for 1878, for example, Eitel noted that Hennessy's enthusiasm for English teaching 'was warmly responded to by a sudden increase of private schools, both day-schools and evening-schools, conducted by Chinese or Eurasian teachers' (*HKGG*, 2 April 1879: 158). In the *laissez-faire* years before 1913, a substantial number of students in Hong Kong thus attended vernacular and mixed-medium schools entirely beyond the regulatory ambit of the colonial regime. It must also be remembered that during the same period, and for many decades to come, a significant number of school-age children in the colony did not receive any form of education at all. These points need to be taken into account when considering the view that education was an instrument of social control in the colonial state (e.g. Pennycook, 2002a,b).

The statistical data reported in this section indicate that in the years between 1883 and 1913 English became the *de jure* object of colonial language policy in Hong Kong. Thus far we have been primarily concerned with *how* the British authorities attempted to spread English-language education in the colony; we have not yet examined a potentially more interesting question (cf. 1.1.3): *Why* did the British seek to promote the study and use of English in Hong Kong during this period? It is to this important question that we now turn.

6.2 British motives in promoting the study and use of English

6.2.1 Phillipson vs. Whitehead revisited

This study has been critical of Phillipson's (1992) account of British motives in 'imposing' English on their colonial subjects in Asia and Africa. This is not so much because his interpretation is wrong – historically, there was nothing unusual about an imperial power promoting its language for its own ends (see 2.4) – as because he presents little empirical evidence to support his thesis. In 1.1.3, we contrasted Phillipson's conspiracy theory with Whitehead's (1995) view that the British promoted English out of a sense of enlightened paternalism. Since our primary concern was to critique *Linguistic Imperialism* we chose not to discuss Whitehead's account in detail. As an advocate of an 'objective' approach to the study of colonial language policy, Whitehead has inevitably received a somewhat gentler ride here than Phillipson. This is perhaps unfair. Whitehead's interpretation of British motives is not without its flaws. Not least among these is his unwitting characterisation of colonial officials as well-meaning, if somewhat confused victims of circumstance. In his efforts to counter (what he sees as) simplistic, ideologically motivated criticisms of education in the Empire, Whitehead at times comes dangerously close to being an apologist for British policies and practices (e.g. Whitehead, 1993). Unfortunately, this impression of administrators as benign muddlers tends to disguise the fact that hard-headed decisions were made in each colony about the respective educational roles of the English and the vernacular language(s). In Hong Kong, the expansion of the Anglo-Chinese and English streams between 1883 and 1913 was not the outcome of the British predilection for 'muddling through'; rather, it sprang from a deliberate decision – or series of decisions – to promote English for political, economic, social and cultural reasons.

Before we examine these factors in detail, it is worth emphasising that language policy in Hong Kong had always been tied in some way to Britain's imperial interests in the region. In Chapter Three, we saw that the adoption of a pro-vernacular policy in the late 1840s was partly motivated by the colonial regime's desire to 'conciliate' its Chinese subjects (3.4.1); in Chapter Four, we noted that the establishment of the Central School was in some degree inspired by the government's wish to extend British 'influence' in China (4.2.3); in Chapter Five, we observed that Hennessy's campaign to promote English-language education was spurred by his desire to cultivate an 'Anglo-Chinese community' in Hong Kong (5.1.1). When considering the motives behind the shift towards an English-oriented policy in the public sector in late nineteenth-century Hong Kong, we therefore need to remember that there was nothing new about the manipulation of language policy to suit imperial ends. What was new, however, was the strength and clarity of British rhetoric about their intentions. Before Hennessy's arrival in the late 1870s, pronouncements on the aims and purposes of language policy tended to be equivocal and circumspect. During the 1880s and 1890s, however, statements about British policy objectives became increasingly robust and explicit. During this period, the Governor's prize-giving speech at Queen's College developed into an annual set-piece address on 'the state of English in Hong Kong'. These speeches, notably those of Sir William Robinson (1891-1898), provide compelling evidence of the motives which underlay the promotion of English-language education. As discussed below, at the heart of the new policy was the belief that the diffusion of English (and, more generally, British culture) would materially aid the advancement of British interests and influence in the Far East.

6.2.2 The advancement of British interests and influence

Official pronouncements on language policy during the 1880s and 1890s indicate that the adoption of an English-oriented policy sprang in part from the government's desire to enlighten (and thereby change) its Chinese subjects. This is evident in what was arguably the definitive statement on language policy during this period. In a speech to the colony's Legislative Council on 25 November 1895, Robinson argued that English-language education had an important role in influencing his young subjects' modes of living and thought:

I am of the opinion that too much attention has hitherto been paid to purely Chinese subjects. With a view, therefore, of promoting a more general knowledge of English amongst the Chinese, the Government proposes in future to subsidize only those schools in which special attention is paid to the teaching of the English language and modern subjects. It is hoped that this will tend to educate the rising generation of Chinese to more enlightened views and ideas, and to dispel the ignorance and blind superstition, which have proved, and still are proving, such a stumbling block to the promotion of their moral and physical well-being. (*Supplement to the HKGG*, 1896: ccxi)

Robinson's initiative was prompted by British dismay at the attitudes and behaviour of the Chinese community during a serious outbreak of plague the previous year. Eitel refers to one of the more bizarre episodes in his education report for the year:

On 21st May, 1894, a panic spread, like wild fire, and emptied most of the Chinese Schools in town owing to the rumour that the Government had resolved, in order to stop the plague, to select a few children from each School and to excise their livers in order to provide the only remedy which would cure plague patients. (*HKGG*, 17 August 1895: 886)

Chinese prejudice against modern medical practices and their intransigence over the government's sanitary measures brought home to the British how little the Chinese in Hong Kong had been touched by Western knowledge and ideas in the half century of colonial rule. One immediate consequence of the debacle was the abolition of Chinese subjects at Queen's College (*Supplement to the HKGG*, 1897: iii).

Robinson's anglicising measures were directed principally at the colony's Chinese community. It is important to note, however, that British pronouncements on the theme of enlightenment saw the transformation of China as the ultimate goal of English-language education in Hong Kong. Here is Governor Bowen (1883-1885) at the Central School in 1885:

... in modern times, while China has remained well-nigh stationary, the Western nations have made rapid and constant progress in all the arts that promote and advance civilization. I hope that a long succession of the Chinese students of this College, after completing their education in England, may have the honour of bringing back with them, and, of introducing into their native land, the results of the humane and enlightened jurisprudence, and of the improved medical science of modern Europe; or may, as civil engineers, help to cover the vast empire of China, as Europe has already been covered, with a network of railways and telegraphs – those powerful promoters of commercial intercourse and of modern civilization. (*CM*, 4 February 1885: 3)

Bowen's successor, Sir William Des Voeux (1887-1891), made several speeches about the missionary purpose of the school. Here is an extract from his first address (see also *CM*, 13 January 1890: 3):

... this school has a very large share in that great work which belongs generally to the Colony of Hong Kong – that of assisting to infuse the leaven of European civilisation into the toiling masses of China – a civilisation, which however defective, in common with all that belongs to mankind, has at least this merit, that it has conduced more largely than any other to bring the greatest happiness to the greatest number. In estimating the benefits of that great civilisation, as you will have the opportunity of doing by the knowledge acquired here, and by having the power of imparting that knowledge to your fellow-countrymen you will have the opportunity of doing a great good, not only to yourselves, but to them. (*CM*, 18 January 1888: 3)

The 1890s were dominated by Sir William Robinson, who even before the crisis of 1894 had shown little sympathy for Chinese customs and ideas (Welsh, 1993). As we have already seen (4.1.3), Robinson's speeches were characterised by extreme impatience with Queen's for its failure to produce graduates imbued with 'Anglo-Saxon ideas'. Doubtless to

the relief of its put-upon Headmaster, Robinson was unable to attend the first prize-giving ceremony after the plague. Instead he sent along the Acting Chief Justice, E.J. Ackroyd, who told the assembled boys that

If each of you brings your little stream of knowledge to the good of China, these little streams in time will form a vast and flowing river, and that mighty nation, when it sees this, will burst its bonds of seclusion and in its thirst of knowledge will stoop down on the banks of this your river and drink and live for ever. (*CM*, 17 January 1895: 3)

Whether they were able to comprehend Ackroyd's words is debatable, but it presumably made a change from listening to Robinson's lectures about British pre-eminence:

Hong Kong, boys, as you know, is a British Colony and will always remain so, and the sooner the Chinese youth understands this thoroughly and understands that it will be better for his own interests not only to be loyal to Her Majesty the Queen and the British Empire, but to adopt what is best in European ideas and methods of thought, the more advantageous it will be for him. This, I think, ought to be the work of a great educational establishment like Victoria College. (*CM*, 9 February 1893: 3)

The idea that Hong Kong had a role to play in the development of China persisted to the end of our period. In a speech at St Stephen's College, Governor Lugard (1907-1912), the driving force behind the founding of Hong Kong University, argued that the colony should become the Oxbridge of the Far East:

Our geographical position should make it the industrial and educational centre in this part of the world, and he hoped that this would be realized one day. He was not speaking optimistically when he said he believed in the awakening of China, also the reciprocal benefit which the awakening would have for this Colony, and he thought that Hongkong should seize these opportunities instead of leaving them to some other to take. (*Hong Kong Telegraph*, 18 January 1908: 23)

A week later, in an address at Queen's, which he claimed was the largest government school in the Empire, Lugard told his audience that 'they were acting parties in the work of the British Empire, not only in educating the children in Hongkong, but in educating them to diffuse their knowledge on the frontiers' (*HKT*, 24 January 1908: 31).

When British officials advocated the dissemination of Western knowledge and ideas via the English schools of Hong Kong, they rarely did so out of a spirit of pure altruism. Governor Bowen was especially conscious of the political benefits that would flow from the promotion of English. In a despatch to Lord Derby soon after his arrival (23 April 1883), Bowen observed that there were ‘great political advantages in spreading a knowledge of English in all parts of the British Empire’ (CO 129/208: 197-198). In a speech at St Joseph’s the following year, he told the boys that it was their ‘duty’ and ‘interest’ to learn English, ‘for the English language, like the English race, is fast overspreading the world’ (CM, 12 January 1884: 3). Towards the end of his Governorship, Bowen claimed in a despatch to Lord Derby (19 May 1885) that the Central School was a ‘powerful, legitimate, and honourable method of spreading British influence throughout this quarter of the globe’ (CO 129/221: 272-273). By the turn of the century, the anglicising mission of *Queen’s College* had become quite explicit. ‘This is a British School,’ its Headmaster pointed out, ‘on British soil, and under British government, where, among other things, British ideas, and to a certain extent, British customs are instilled into the minds of the pupils’ (CM, 9 February 1901: 5).

Underlying this desire to spread British influence was the belief that it would materially aid the advancement of British business interests in China. This view was spelled out by the Indian-born Legislative Councillor and merchant, E.R. Belilios, at the inauguration of Belilios Public School in December 1893:

Let us make Hongkong the Oxford and Cambridge of China, the seat of learning for the vast empire on whose fringe we stand. Let us send forth highly-educated men and women to overrun this empire. Instead of maintaining in this part of the world a great navy and a strong military force let us curtail and reduce them, and the funds thus saved let us devote to the upkeep of schools to educate the Chinese. Instead of opening up the country by force of arms to our commerce, our industries, and our manufactures, let us endeavour to create an amicable link between China and the West by

sending forth educated Chinese into the empire from this tiny dot on her coast. Men and women taught to think and act as we do scattered over China would leaven the mass, and the people, taught by gratitude, would learn to think well of the British nation, be eager to welcome commerce with her, and ready to exchange ideas as well as goods. (CO 129/ 260: 476)

Commenting on Belilios's proposal the following month, Robinson said he was uncertain whether it would ever be realised but 'as far as the Government is concerned no obstacle will be put in the way' (*CM*, 25 January 1894: 3). Whether the administration assumed an active role (or even maintained the unobstructive one promised by the Governor) is open to doubt. The late 1890s were a period of retrenchment in Hong Kong, and consequently funding for Anglo-Chinese schooling was significantly reduced (as Figure 5 reveals). Such was the lack of progress in implementing Belilios's project that Robinson even suggested that the colony's efforts to promote English compared unfavourably with those of several other cities in China:

Are we in Hong Kong doing as well as they are doing in the other ports of China? Is this great College, with its magnificent hall, and great staff of teachers, doing all we can towards spreading the English language? They are doing a great deal in Shanghai, Nanking and Peking, and it is possible that the Chinese nation is awakening to the advantages of an English education ... I want Hong Kong to take as prominent a part as those ports are doing in promoting a knowledge of the English language amongst all these students. (*CM*, 22 January 1897: 3)

The school to which Belilios gave his name (and \$25,000) had originally been called the Central School for Girls. As the name suggests, the new institution was modelled on the Central School. The circumstances surrounding the establishment of the girls' school provide further evidence of the administration's desire to use English-language education as an indirect means of consolidating British rule. Although Belilios was its principal benefactor, the initiative behind the school's foundation came from Eitel. The Inspector of Schools set out his plan in a memorandum of 5 July 1889. Although his intentions were not explicit, Eitel's proposal to open a girls' school for the same class as that which sent its sons

to the Central School appears to have been motivated by the desire to cultivate an elite class of English-speaking Chinese (of the kind that had already emerged in Singapore). Eitel's memorandum also provides evidence that the government sought to stimulate interest in English (rather than simply respond to the demand that inevitably arose from its use in government and business).

When framing his plan, Eitel was conscious of what Frederick Stewart had termed the 'melancholy results' of teaching Chinese girls English (4.3.2). However, he argued that the 'circumstances surrounding this Girls' School problem' had undergone a 'very considerable alteration' since the 1860s (CO 129/242: 80). Although he admitted that there was little demand for English education for girls (since it had minimal 'money value'), he argued that 'it is sure to be called forth in steadily increasing force by the supply' (ibid.: 81). He then outlined his reasons for proposing the scheme:

... here in Hong Kong, where for twenty-seven years the Government has annually spent ever increasing sums of money to give Chinese boys an English education, wondering all the time why this continuous teaching of English produces so little visible effect in the direction of spreading a knowledge of the English language in the Colony [cf. 6.3.1], and why in so many cases the giving of an English education to Chinese boys appears eventually to deteriorate rather than to improve their morals, the Government have, by excluding Chinese girls from the onward movement of English education in the Colony, systematically widened the gulf separating men and women, and, by leaving the men brought up with a knowledge of English to marry wives devoid of that knowledge, methodically prevented the spread of the English language in Chinese families. I have repeatedly heard Chinese mothers, whose sons were educated at the Government Central School and subsequently sent to England or Scotland, that their education gave them a contempt for un-educated Chinese women and that only in exceptional cases Chinese girls could be found who would be fit help-mates for them in domestic and conjugal respects. (ibid.: 81)

Belilios Public School thus appears to have been conceived with the aim of nurturing a class of marriageable women for the graduates of Queen's College. In Eitel's view, the unions of English-educated men and women provided the optimum method of spreading the use of

English. From the British perspective, the emergence of an anglicised Chinese elite in Hong Kong would have obvious political and economic advantages.

The evidence presented in this sub-section thus (unsurprisingly) suggests that the government promoted English in order to advance British interests and influence in the region. These were their intentions. Whether these intentions were fulfilled is another matter, and this will be discussed in 6.3. Before we turn to this question, it would be illuminating to compare the findings presented in 6.1 and 6.2 with Pennycook's account of the nature and purposes of colonial language policy in Hong Kong during the period under review.

6.2.3 Pennycook's account of colonial language policy in Hong Kong

In a recent study, Pennycook (2002a) claims that colonial language policy in Hong Kong in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries centred on the promotion of a conservative form of Chinese education. As was the case in Malaya, Pennycook claims that the British regime promoted vernacular education as a means of social control. As will be immediately apparent, Pennycook's account of the nature and purposes of language policy in Hong Kong does not accord with the statistical and textual evidence presented in 6.1 and 6.2.

Let us first consider the nature of British policy. The evidence in the shape of enrolment trends, funding priorities and official pronouncements indicates that from the early 1880s onwards the government pursued an increasingly English-oriented policy (in the public sector). Pennycook (2002a: 106), however, claims that 'in spite of earlier Anglicist orientations of some 19th century governors of Hong Kong, and in spite of the brief but powerful presence of Lugard, language education policies shifted towards vernacular education'. In an apparent attempt to substantiate his argument about the adoption of a politically 'safe' pro-Chinese policy, Pennycook in the next sentence

introduces the Inspector of Schools, E.J. Eitel, whom he claims – citing Lethbridge’s 1983 introduction to Eitel (1895) – was a ‘sound orientalist and sinologist’. Pennycook then quotes some observations Eitel reportedly made to the Education Commission (1882) to the effect that traditional Chinese education was of ‘higher advantage’ to the government than secular English education because of its emphasis on morality.

Pennycook appears to be suggesting that language policy (through Eitel’s initiative) ‘shifted towards vernacular education’ *after* the regimes of several Anglicist governors, including that of Lugard, whose term in office Pennycook regards as the high noon of Anglicism in Hong Kong. Although Pennycook provides the dates of Eitel’s tenure as Inspector (1879-1897), he fails to notice that Eitel left Hong Kong a decade *before* Lugard’s arrival (1907) and was dead by the time of his departure (1912). It is therefore difficult to see how Eitel could be associated with a shift towards a vernacular policy in the post-Lugard era. As Figure 2 demonstrates, this supposed Orientalist in fact presided over a significant expansion of Anglo-Chinese schooling and a gradual decline in Chinese schooling during his Inspectorship. Eitel’s Orientalist credentials also need to be examined in relation to the observations reproduced below, which were recorded at a meeting with Queen’s College staff in 1893. During the meeting, Eitel expressed the view that each class should be taught by an English master with the help of two Chinese assistants. This prompted a British master to point out that native masters would object to being placed in a subordinate role. Eitel responded by suggesting that if they were unhappy with the proposal they were ‘at liberty to seek work elsewhere’, and then went on to say that

God has made the English race to rule the world, therefore the sooner you Chinese assistants recognise that it is your place to be subservient to English masters the better for you. I am a German, but I say unhesitatingly that Shakespeare is infinitely above Goethe. The English language is superior to all others in expression and lucidity. Next to Chinese German is the most pedantic. (CO 129/260: 140)

The second piece of evidence Pennycook (2002a: 107) presents to support his view that ‘the government was promoting vernacular education for its conservative ideals’ comes from the mid-1920s, when (as he points out) the colonial regime was rocked by an anti-British general strike and economic boycott. Drawing on Luk (1991), Pennycook (2002a: 107) states that Hong Kong’s Orientalist Governor, Sir Cecil Clementi, sought to quell the rising tide of Chinese nationalism by developing a curriculum ‘based on orthodox Confucianism emphasizing social hierarchy and subservience to patriarchal authority’. Pennycook concludes his discussion, which is repeated in Pennycook (2002b), with the following summary:

Often far more important, therefore, than the civilizing zeal of English teaching was the conservative use of vernacular education, developed and implemented by colonial administrators and Orientalist scholars. These were the crucial tools of governmentality through language-in-education policies. Conservative Chinese education was the colonial route to making docile bodies. (ibid.: 108)

Pennycook’s account of British policy in the early decades of the twentieth century also runs counter to the facts. In the 1900s, the government, far from pursuing a pro-vernacular policy, was actually withdrawing from Chinese education in order to concentrate on Anglo-Chinese and English education (Figure 2). In the decade after Lugard, when Pennycook believes policy took an Orientalist turn, there were no government Chinese schools at all. While it is true that the administration opened a showpiece Chinese school (the Clementi Middle School) in response to the unrest of the 1920s (a development which Pennycook overlooks) (Li, 1930), this did not alter the fundamentally Anglicist orientation of British policy in Hong Kong before the Second World War. If the government had been pursuing an Orientalist policy during the 1920s and 1930s, Burney (1935) would not have been so critical of its neglect of vernacular education (see 1.2.6).

Although in some contexts the British did seek to promote vernacular education (partly) for the reasons Pennycook outlines (see 2.2.3 and 2.3.2), in Hong Kong they tended to neglect Chinese education in the government sector (from the 1880s onwards). It is true that vernacular schools dominated the aided and private sectors (in terms of enrolments), but since these institutions were not under direct government control they are unlikely to have been effective vehicles for the accomplishment of Britain's imperial ends. And this brings us to another flaw in Pennycook's account. Even if the colonial regime had implemented a pro-vernacular policy with the intention of producing 'docile bodies', Pennycook provides no evidence to suggest that this objective was actually achieved. If he believes that conservative Chinese education did help the British control their subjects, and the extract above does not seem to discount this possibility, then he could be accused of having a somewhat patronising view of students in pre-World War II Hong Kong, for it would imply that they were easy prey to a school curriculum, that they would unquestioningly take in and – to British satisfaction – act upon Confucian notions of hierarchy and obedience.

We are of course in a position to gauge the effects of a politically motivated language policy. This was the Anglicist policy pursued by the Hong Kong government in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. How far did this policy succeed in promoting the English language and (more generally) British modes of living and thought in the colony? This question will be examined in the next section.

6.3 The failure of colonial language policies and practices

6.3.1 Dissatisfaction with the results of English-language education

The evidence suggests that the policy to promote the study and use of English in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a signal failure. As in other British colonies during this period, notably India (2.1.9) and the Straits Settlements (2.2.2), the spread of English-language education in Hong Kong was accompanied by considerable dissatisfaction in official circles with the Anglo-Chinese schools for failing to produce linguistically proficient graduates.

In a despatch to the Colonial Office in 1883, Bowen said that he was ‘surprised and disappointed to find that comparatively slight efforts have hitherto been made to spread a knowledge of the English language among the heterogeneous population of Hong Kong’ (CO 129/208: 197). Whitehall’s response is interesting because it indicates that the metropolitan government continued to be sceptical about the widespread promotion of English. In an internal minute, C.P. Lucas stated that ‘I do not agree with him [Bowen] as to the extent to which it [English] should be pushed. Government should certainly support purely vernacular schools and I wish he would read the former correspondence before he writes his despatches’ (ibid.: 192-193). In his official reply, Lord Derby told the Governor that he would be ‘glad to consider suggestions which you may wish to make for the encouragement of English speaking provided that such encouragement does not result in the neglect of vernacular education’ (ibid.: 207). A decade later, when the pro-English policy was gaining in momentum, the Colonial Office continued to stress the importance of vernacular education. In an internal minute in 1892, Lucas noted that ‘the main business of a government is to educate children in their own language’ (CO 129/254: 361). However, he also pointed out (in characteristic Whitehall style) that it had not been held ‘that there

should not be one leading government institution for higher [i.e. English] education, which should be a model for the colony' (ibid.: 361). Doubtless wary of reviving the old controversy, Lucas advised his colleagues that 'perhaps it would be well to say very little: as these educational subjects are rather slippery ground' (ibid.: 362).

As we have already noted, Robinson was outspoken in his criticism of the quality and extent of government-sponsored English teaching. His dissatisfaction was made plain in his first gubernatorial address at Victoria College:

... I find that the educational efforts of the Government to promote the spread of the English language has so far resulted in a complete failure, I may say, in making any great impression upon the masses of the Chinese speaking residents in this Colony (applause). Now, we have been in possession of Hongkong for the last 50 years, and yet what is known as a real English education is the luxury of the few. (*CM*, 23 February 1892: 3)

By 1896, Robinson was given to haranguing students at Queen's for their failure to learn English effectively. 'You live under the protection of England in this Colony,' he stormed, 'and living under that protection you should not merely experiment with English but should become English speaking subjects of the greatest Empire in the world' (*CM*, 6 February 1896: 3). There were to be no more experiments (referring to students' tendency to become smatterers); instead, Queen's 'must be transformed into a practical, useful institution, second to none in the Colony, where a good, thorough, sound education in English will be given' (ibid.: 3).

In an editorial the following day, the *China Mail* (7 February 1896: 2), congratulated Robinson for 'putting his foot down upon the faulty system which has now been demonstrated to exist in the College', and, in particular, for highlighting its 'failure to exercise an Anglicising influence commensurate with the money and labour expended'. In the paper's view, Queen's needed to be reformed in order to bring it 'more in accord with the conditions and prospects of the Institution in the time of Dr Stewart' (ibid.: 2). This was

not the first time that the quality of English-language education at Queen's had been unfavourably compared to that of Stewart's Central School. In a confidential 1894 report, John Chalmers and Bishop Burdon observed that

What the Queen's College is and what it was meant to be are still very different things; and the results obtained by this expensive establishment come seriously short of what might be expected ... it may be doubted whether the success in teaching English comes up to that of the earlier schools of the Colony such as St Paul's College, the Anglo-Chinese College, and the Central School under Dr Stewart. (CO 129/262: 315)

These observations suggest that the tendency to regard Hong Kong's educational past as a 'golden age' was not an exclusively modern phenomenon (Evans, 1996). The report claimed that English standards had declined since Stewart's time, and yet, as we saw in Chapter Five, the Central School was frequently criticised for its failure to produce proficient graduates. What is interesting here is that Chalmers and Burdon were 'old Hong Kong hands' (see 5.3), and therefore must have known about the controversies of the Stewart era. The passage of time also appears to have been kind to the early mission schools: as we saw in 3.3.5 and 3.3.6, both St Paul's and the Anglo-Chinese College closed after apparently failing to accomplish their respective missions.

6.3.2 Examiners' reports on Queen's College

As in the modern era, this sense of dissatisfaction with English standards was founded on the perceptions of influential figures within the colonial establishment rather than on empirical evidence. As we have seen, much of this discontent centred on Queen's College, which was inevitable given its status as the colony's premier school. One consequence of this discontent was the introduction – against Wright's wishes – of an independent examination in the mid-1890s. As the extracts below reveal, the examiners' reports indicate that the perception of the school's failings was not without foundation. In a sense, it is

unfair to present this evidence to demonstrate students' linguistic shortcomings as it somehow suggests that they were wholly to blame for the problem (as indeed is implied in the examiners' reports). In the circumstances, it was inevitable that their results would be unsatisfactory: as we shall see in 6.3.3, the whole system – curricula, materials, methods, learning environment, etc. – conspired against the effective teaching and learning of English.

The following extracts point to serious problems with grammar and pronunciation:

... many boys wrote in a language so peculiarly their own as to be quite unintelligible to the examiners. (*HKGG*, 19 March 1898: 255)

It was obvious that in many cases the boys, while reproducing the sounds correctly, had no comprehension of what they were reading, while in other cases the enunciation was so defective, that, though we were able to understand the boy, so long as we followed his reading with our eyes on the book, without this aid what he read conveyed no meaning to us. (*HKGG*, 27 April 1901: 883)

Their grammar is on the whole very weak: in fact, though they would probably be surprised and disgusted to hear it said, they use a sort of "pidgin" English, which has marked features of its own. (*HKGG*, 26 October 1906: 1899)

One consequence of their apparent inability to express themselves accurately and coherently in their own words was that many students resorted to rote learning when preparing for examinations:

The English History papers exhibit a considerable acquaintance with the phraseology of the text-books, but when this is coupled with a very slight ability to explain its meaning it may be doubted whether the system of learning passages by heart is altogether conducive to a satisfactory knowledge of History. (*HKGG*, 15 February 1896: 122)

The faults arising from attempts at learning by heart are evident in the omission of important steps in an argument, and in the impossible order in which sentences are arranged. The majority of these boys do not understand what they try to write ... (*HKGG*, 19 March 1898: 256)

Unfortunately, as these extracts reveal, students sometimes came unstuck when attempting to reproduce in examination answers the material they had been forced to learn at school:

Magna Charta was a great charta was a famous outlaw man who lived in the Sherewood Forest. (*HKGG*, 27 April 1901: 884)

Sir Joshua Reynolds was the leader of the Jews after Moses' death. (*ibid.*: 886)

Professor Pasteur famous for training horses at a circus. (*ibid.*: 886)

It is hard to determine whether the problems at Queen's were common to all the colony's English-medium schools. In a letter commenting on Robinson's unflattering prize-day address in 1892, 'Amicus Humani Generis' maintained that 'Those remarks do not apply to the Victoria College alone, but to all the schools wherein the English language is taught' (*CM*, 26 February 1892: 3). Eitel, however, believed that the government flagship was being overtaken by St Joseph's College, the Diocesan Boys' School and some other Anglo-Chinese and English schools, despite having the best staff, accommodation and materials (*HKGG*, 20 June 1891: 498-499), and this was because the 'system' employed at the school was 'radically wrong' (*CO* 129/260: 61). When assessing Eitel's criticisms, however, we need to bear in mind that the Inspector – as Lucas noted – had 'rather an animus against the Victoria College' (*CO* 129/245: 287).

6.3.3 Factors militating against the effective teaching and learning of English

As would be the case a century later, public discourse about the teaching and learning of English in late Victorian Hong Kong was dominated by the belief that standards were not commensurate with the time and resources devoted to English-language education. ‘I and the taxpayers want to have our money’s worth,’ complained Robinson (in the manner of a modern tycoon). ‘We want to see some palpable and beneficial results from this large expenditure of money’ (*CM*, 6 February 1896: 3). Despite the sense of puzzlement that often accompanied complaints about English-language education at Queen’s College, when we analyse the sociolinguistic and educational environment in which English was being taught and learned, it is hardly surprising that few students graduated with a firm grasp of the language.

Although Eitel’s criticisms centred on the ‘system’ of education practised at Queen’s, hindsight enables us to see that the source of the problem was that the colonial establishment expected its graduates to possess native or native-like levels of proficiency in English despite the fact that most of them came from a social environment in which English was a remote and despised foreign language. Even if the authorities had provided an educational environment that was conducive to effective language learning, given the limited support for English outside the classroom, it is unlikely that it would have produced the high standards demanded by the official and business communities. As it was, Wright’s system compounded the problems that inevitably flowed from the unpromising sociolinguistic environment. The principal shortcomings of this system are summarised and illustrated below.

(i) The problem of Anglo-Chinese education

As in the modern era, students at Queen's College were perceived to fall between two stools because of the attempt to learn both English and Chinese. Bishop Burdon referred to what was already a long-standing problem in an address at the Diocesan Boys' School:

... are we to mix both systems of education? English would take all the time a boy has in order to get a mere smattering of it; but he wants in addition to learn a little Chinese. It is my opinion that both languages cannot be learnt together. I have had experience of Chinese for nearly forty years and my experience goes to show this that if a lad wants to be thoroughly acquainted with Chinese he must go for it entirely and not take up anything else. He will be considered an uneducated man in his own country if he does not know Chinese, but he has to make his choice between that and learning something of English. (CM, 27 February 1892: 3)

As we saw in 5.3.3, Eitel was a critic of mixed-medium education. In the following extract, which is taken from Colonial Office records, he provides an illuminating analysis of what he terms 'this Anglo-Chinese problem':

[Queen's College] aimed from the beginning at giving at the same time both an elementary Chinese education in the Chinese language and an elementary English education with the use of both the English and Chinese languages, but for the sake of unity the ordinary methods of teaching Chinese have always been more or less anglicized. The hybrid Anglo-Chinese character of the School, which has no counterpart in social life, involves enormous difficulties. The languages and two codes of civilization of absolutely irreconcilable [*sic*] tendencies are forcibly welded together. Two sets of masters, English and Chinese, who cannot or will not work in mutual subordination or even cooperation, because each set retains its own antagonistic national bias, have to be employed. As cooperation is, with the present Chinese staff, impossible, some classes are taught by Englishmen only, others by Chinese teachers only. Englishmen unable to read, write or speak Chinese with facility have to teach Chinese translation for which they acknowledge themselves incompetent and to supervise classes under instruction in classical Chinese. Chinamen anti-English to the backbone and unable to pronounce English correctly or to speak it idiomatically, have to teach English dictation, grammar, and even history and composition. Consequently the school resembles a garden in which one set of gardeners is busily occupied in planting weeds which the other set of gardeners laboriously strive to pull out one by one ... It stands to reason that the system, and not the Headmaster is to blame, if the results of both the elementary English and the elementary Chinese teaching of the school are unsatisfactory, as indeed they are in all but exceptional cases. Under the present system the

School produces but smatterers in Chinese and smatterers in English. I can only admire the pertinacity with which the Headmaster continues to work on, in the face of manifest failure and in the old traditional groove, towards a solution of this Anglo-Chinese problem which Bishop Smith in St Paul's College and Dr Legge in his Anglo-Chinese College long ago acknowledged themselves unable to solve. But the inherent difficulties of an Anglo-Chinese School naturally unable to produce good elementary English results have been terribly increased by the superaddition of the aim, which of late years (ever since this elementary school has been named a College) has been insisted upon with growing vigour viz: – to turn the School into a High School. The attempt to force the elementary English teaching of the School, before it is formed and solidified, into the channel of the Oxford Local Examinations has proven, as an addition to the original incubus of Anglo-Chinese hybridism, a perfect curse to the School. (CO 129/260: 86-88)

As we noted in 6.2.2, Chinese subjects were removed from the curriculum in 1896.

Up to this point, the Colonial Office had argued, though not always vigorously, that the study of Chinese should not be sacrificed to that of English. In this case, however, Whitehall accepted the decision to make Queen's (in effect) an English school, although, as Lucas's minute of 15 August 1896 reveals, by this stage the metropolitan authorities appear to have grown weary of the 'interminable controversy' over the school (CO 129/271: 393): 'The doing away with the purely Chinese school and giving more time to English, especially English colloquial, would seem a good thing but this wretched college has been so pulled about that I have little hope for it' (CO 129/272: 269). As it had since the early 1840s, the Colonial Office was reacting to, and generally endorsing, initiatives taken in Hong Kong.

(ii) The adoption of an inappropriate grammar-school curriculum

As Eitel reveals, during Wright's Headmastership the scope and level of English studies at Queen's College were gradually expanded. As a result, the content and methods of instruction in the Upper School acquired many of the characteristics of an English grammar school (while those employed in the Lower School continued to reflect standard practice in English elementary schools). During his first decade at the helm, Wright ('an Oxford man') introduced the study of Shakespeare, English History and Latin, which (improbably enough) he believed was a necessary basis for the acquisition of English as a foreign language (*CM*, 13 January 1890: 3). Unsurprisingly, a recurring theme in official reports was that the curriculum, textbooks and methods used at the school were wholly inappropriate for Chinese students in Hong Kong:

The principal characteristic of the methods in vogue in Victoria College is that they are a slavish imitation of the methods of an English Grammar School in utter oblivion of the fact that the boys of Victoria College come to school not only profoundly ignorant of English colloquial and of everything English but with their heads crammed full of un-English or anti-English ideas. (*CO* 129/260: 92)

It seems that the practical object of teaching the Chinese to speak and write good idiomatic English is too much lost sight of in the endeavour to explain obsolete words and obscure allusions in Shakespeare and impart knowledge fitted for University Examinations, but of little utility to the Chinese. (*CO* 129/262: 316)

The reading books appear to be unsuitable. The stories contained in them are not very interesting, and deal with subjects with which a Chinese boy is unfamiliar. Reading Books suited to local needs are no doubt badly wanted. (*HKGG*, 20 November 1903: 1628)

Since the content and language of the materials were not adapted to the needs of non-native speakers of English, and since (in any case) most students did not possess the requisite proficiency to study effectively in English, it was inevitable that teachers made considerable use of Cantonese to explain the ideas and information in English textbooks:

... much of the inability to speak or understand English is due to the fact that the Chinese masters employ Chinese and not English, when giving directions connected with the ordinary routine work. We have no wish to question the zeal of the Chinese masters; they appeared to be carrying out to the best of their ability a very difficult task, but in the Lower School, Chinese as a medium of communication between master and boy was, as we have said, far too common. (*HKGG*, 20 November 1903: 1626)

(iii) The absence of a principled approach to teaching English

Although the English curriculum included apparently relevant language subjects such as grammar, reading and composition, their practical value in enhancing students' proficiency seems to have been rather limited, and this was because they were taught in much the same way as they were in England. What emerges from reports on Queen's College during this period is the growing recognition of the differences between teaching English to native and non-native speakers, and (therefore) of the need to develop syllabi, materials and methods specifically designed for learners of English as a foreign language. The need for a principled approach to ELT is evident in a letter to Eitel written by four Queen's College masters in August 1893, in which they criticise the school's unsystematic approach to the teaching of English:

... there is no time set apart for it [conversation], nor has there been any systematic teaching of it. Consequently, great numbers of boys in the upper classes are unable to understand the simplest explanations given in English. (*CO* 129/ 260: 80)

... there is no system [in teaching composition] up to the First Class. A story is read to the boys and this they are expected to reproduce, – without having had any training by means of such graduated lessons and exercises as are essential in learning a foreign language. Hence it is that a first class boy cannot construct grammatically a simple sentence. (*ibid.*: 80)

In Eitel's view, the main reason for the school's failure was that

Chinese boys, though coming to this school without being able to speak a single word in English, are here taught precisely as English boys are taught in England. The same reading books, the same grammar, the same

organization and methods are applied to them in total oblivion of the fact that the circumstances are entirely different. (ibid.: 112)

Although he welcomed the compilation of ‘an Anglo-Chinese conversational phrase book’, he complained that

vocabulary and phrases are here put together in a hap-hazard sort of way, there being no attempt made to lead in the scholars, inductively, as Hamilton, Prendergast or even Ollendorff do, from particular instances to general rules, so as to enable the scholar to gather for himself the rules (of accidence or syntax) from concrete examples. (ibid.: 112)

Perhaps significantly, this is one of only a handful of references to modern developments in language pedagogy in the sources consulted for the present study. As the following extract suggests, ELT at Queen’s was wholly untouched by reforms in Europe:

What is sometimes called the *New Method*, the *Gouin*, and other related systems, are now almost universally employed in France and Germany and very generally in England, but are apparently unknown or not approved of at the College, as means of teaching colloquial English. (HKGG, 20 November 1903: 1626)

(iv) The abilities and attitudes of the masters

The school’s British masters were recruited directly from schools or universities in the United Kingdom, and thus had no experience of teaching English to non-native speakers (and in some cases of any form of teaching). There is evidence to suggest, however, that the problems which inevitably stemmed from their lack of relevant professional experience were exacerbated by an unsympathetic attitude towards their pupils. On the basis of his inspections, Eitel claimed that teacher-pupil relations were generally ‘those of a drill sergeant and his recruits’ (CO 129/260: 96). In Eitel’s view, a vast gulf separated the British masters from their Chinese pupils:

So long as you apply an English standard of thought, feeling and volition to the judgment and treatment of your boys, you do not understand the working of their mind and you will unconsciously misjudge and ill-treat them. And as

long as the boys continue to feel instinctively that their teachers do not understand them, there cannot possibly spring up that bond of sympathy between teacher and pupil which is the great secret of all educational success, and which is signally lacking in the relations which most of you have with your Chinese scholars. (ibid.: 115)

The school's Chinese masters were also (apparently) not well suited – professionally or attitudinally – to teach English effectively. In a frank address in 1893, Eitel told them that as teachers of English they were in a 'false and mischievous position'; false, because 'you are manifestly incompetent for this kind of work'; mischievous, because 'you persistently commit and propagate the very errors in pronunciation and idiom which the English masters strive to eradicate' (ibid.: 104-105). Like their British counterparts, their professional shortcomings were (according to Eitel) compounded by their attitudes to their work:

I do not blame you for preferring everything Chinese to everything English or for speaking English only when on duty. I only say that a Chinaman, to whom English is an uncongenial, foreign and irksome tongue, is unfit to teach it. Most of you have impressed me with the conviction that you are not only radically pro-Chinese but anti-foreign in all your tastes and mental proclivities. There is nothing English about you. You do not love the English language for you have never made a particular study of it. Then how can you effectively teach it? (ibid.: 105)

(v) The abilities and attitudes of the students

Throughout this study we have noted that European educators frequently complained about students' tendency to leave school as soon as they had acquired just enough English to obtain employment. Even at the end of our period, only a minority of pupils completed the full course of studies on offer at Queen's (*HKGG*, 3 February 1905: 110). This was entirely understandable: many were too poor to remain at school for the full seven years; the English curriculum was hopelessly ill-suited to their needs, wants and abilities; and the insensitivity displayed by some of their teachers doubtless reinforced an already well-developed

antipathy towards the British. As Wright noted, these boys were a sealed book to their expatriate masters:

Stolidity and lack of facial expression render it next to impossible for a teacher to gather how much of what he says is understood by the class; he has not the satisfaction of seeing perplexed ignorance dissolve into triumphant knowledge, for difficulties do not pucker the brow, nor does success kindle the eye of the Chinese student. This difficulty is increased tenfold by the fact that all instruction is given in English, thus there is not merely the doubt whether a boy understands the subject itself, but a fear that he does not grasp the phrase in which it is conveyed. (*CM*, 13 January 1890: 3)

One consequence of the students' pragmatic, quick-fix approach to their studies was that they developed little sense of belonging to the school. As the Committee on Education (1902: 493) observed, 'Queen's College does not appear to engender any spirit of *esprit de corps* among its boys'. Many students appear to have viewed Queen's as a language crammer rather than an institute of education: they attended the school in order to pick up a smattering of English for employment purposes, but because of the system that developed under Wright they had to accomplish this (as the Committee noted) by learning 'dry facts relating to early and medieval English History, and to the geography of countries which are not remotely connected with the Far East' (*ibid.*: 504). These were not promising conditions for the effective acquisition of English.

By the close of the Victorian era, the government's Anglicist policy was perceived to be failing in its objective of spreading the English language and Western knowledge in Hong Kong. As the colony's premier school, Queen's College inevitably attracted much of the blame for this 'disappointing' state of affairs, but it is important to emphasise that the system as a whole was also perceived to be falling short. For this reason, the administration formed a Committee on Education to investigate the 'defects' in the colony's education system, and it is to their findings and recommendations that we now turn.

6.4 The Committee on Education (1902)

6.4.1 The reaffirmation of an Anglicist policy

The Committee's report is divided into three sections: a description of the existing education system, an assessment of the government's responsibilities in relation to the various classes and races of children residing in the colony, and an analysis of the system's shortcomings together with recommendations for improvement. It is not necessary to examine the report in detail as many of its observations about the system's failings are linked to issues and problems discussed in the previous section. What we do instead is highlight its principal theme, and the proposals it put forward to reform the Anglo-Chinese and vernacular schools.

At first glance, the report appears merely to endorse the Anglicist policy which the administration had been pursuing (in the public sector) since the late 1870s: '... in Imperial interests it is desirable to offer instruction in the English Language and Western Knowledge to all young Chinese who are willing to study them' (Committee on Education, 1902: 498). On closer inspection, however, the report represents something of a retreat from the extreme English-only Anglicism of the late 1890s towards the more inclusive form of Anglicism represented in Auckland's Minute (2.1.7) and Wood's Despatch (2.1.8); that is, one which saw an important role for the vernacular languages in the dissemination of Western learning. Although the report states that English should be the main object of colonial language policy in Hong Kong, its authors stress that this should not be at the expense of Chinese. This will be apparent when we examine their recommendations for the Anglo-Chinese and vernacular schools.

6.4.2 Recommendations for the Anglo-Chinese schools

The Committee believed that the Anglo-Chinese schools should perform three ‘essential’ functions: provide instruction in the English language (which was their *raison d’être*); offer compulsory instruction in Western knowledge; and maintain and improve their students’ proficiency in written Chinese. Although they were ‘fully alive to the extreme importance of spreading the English Language among the Chinese’ (ibid.: 499), they were adamant that the study of Chinese should not be neglected in pursuit of this aim:

The argument that Chinese should learn English to the exclusion of their own Written Language is often heard, but it will not bear serious consideration. No Chinese, however learned in English and Western Knowledge, can hope to be of influence with his countrymen, nor can he indeed communicate with them, if ignorant of the written character which binds the Chinese Empire together. (ibid.: 499)

This view guided British policy in Hong Kong until the end of our period (Imperial Education Conference, 1915).

In the Committee’s view the Anglo-Chinese schools were ‘defective’ in all three ‘essentials’: their students’ English results were ‘not commensurate with the time devoted to the study’; they taught Western knowledge ‘unsystematically and disjointedly’, and not at all in the early years; and they failed to exploit their students’ mother tongue ‘to aid them in acquiring English and Western Knowledge’ (ibid.: 499-500). The Committee then highlighted the folly of the existing policy, which required the exclusive use of English as the language of instruction for modern subjects:

How it could ever have been thought possible to explain arithmetic or geography in English to boys who know no English is not clear. As a matter of fact the masters have ignored this condition systematically, throwing themselves on the reasonableness of the Inspector of Schools. In Queen’s College and the Anglo-Chinese District Schools, Chinese has always been the actual medium of instruction. (ibid.: 500)

To rectify these ‘defects’, the Committee recommended that ‘English should be taught with a view to its practical use’; that Western Knowledge ‘should be taught in Chinese until the students have acquired so good an understanding of English as to enable them easily to receive instruction in English’; and that before being admitted to such schools ‘students should be required to shew that they possess a useful knowledge of the Chinese Written Language’ (ibid.: 500). It will be noted that the Committee’s emphasis on the need for students to develop a firm grounding in their mother tongue before being allowed to study in English is similar to that set out in the 1904 Resolution on Indian education policy (see 2.1.9). The Committee also proposed that the government replace the Oxford Local Examination with one that was ‘suited to local educational conditions and not designed to prove the attainments of English boys educated in England’ (ibid.: 501).

The report’s findings and proposals applied to all schools in the Anglo-Chinese stream, viz. Queen’s College, the government district schools and the mission schools. In addition to the general proposals outlined above, the report made specific recommendations for each category of school. The Committee’s comments on Queen’s echoed many of the criticisms that had been levelled at the school during the 1890s. As part of their investigation, they tested the proficiency of its best students (by means of translation and essay writing exercises), and found that the majority produced work that was either ‘bad’ or ‘quite worthless’ (ibid.: 504). Disappointing as these findings were, the Committee claimed that ‘It is not probable that even these results could be equalled by Chinese schoolboys elsewhere in the Colony’ (ibid.: 504). On the basis of their inquiry, the Committee recommended that Queen’s revert to its original purpose, namely as a school exclusively for Chinese students. Although the proportion of non-Chinese boys had always been small, it was felt that their presence forced the school to combine – unsatisfactorily it was believed –

the functions of an English and an Anglo-Chinese school. The Committee's other major recommendation also represented a return to the early Stewart era: the reinstatement of an entrance test in Chinese to ensure that students possessed a sound foundation in their first language.

As their comments above suggest, the Committee found that language education in the Anglo-Chinese district and mission schools was in an even more unsatisfactory state than it was at Queen's. In the Committee's view, the main reason for this was that they were supervised by ill-qualified Chinese teachers. The shortage of competent local teachers was an inevitable consequence of the government's neglect of teacher education and – a familiar complaint still – of the understandable preference of proficient Chinese bilinguals to pursue more lucrative careers in business. In response to this problem (whose causes they largely ignored), the Committee opted for a solution that would be resorted to at various intervals throughout the twentieth century: the recruitment of native-speaking English teachers. Henceforth, all Anglo-Chinese schools should be supervised by an expatriate master (an initiative that would have important funding implications).

Taken as a whole, the Committee's proposals for the Anglo-Chinese stream may be seen as the first tentative step in the process (that would slowly gain in momentum during the twentieth century) of developing curricula, materials and methods suited to the needs of Chinese-speaking students in Hong Kong. The Committee's calls for more 'practical' methods of teaching English, for content subjects to be taught from 'the local point of view', and for examinations to be based on 'local educational conditions' are indicative of an increasing recognition in government circles of the fundamental differences between teaching and learning English as a first and a foreign language. These recommendations may be taken as an indictment of Wright's Queen's College. Their views on the need for

students to possess a firm grounding in Chinese before embarking on their English studies, and of the need to maintain and improve their first language while studying English, were also a reaction against developments at Queen's in the 1880s and 1890s, during which Stewart's entrance test was abandoned and Chinese – which had once enjoyed equality of status with English – was gradually removed from the curriculum. One immediate consequence of the Committee's report was that Chinese studies were reintroduced in 1903.

6.4.3 Recommendations for the vernacular schools

Since (by their own admission) the Committee devoted most of their attention to the problematic Anglo-Chinese stream, it was inevitable that their proposals for the vernacular schools were much less substantial. The Committee believed that the Chinese schools were failing in their two 'essential' functions of providing effective instruction in written Chinese and in Western knowledge. In the first case, too much time was devoted to memorising the Chinese classics, and in the second, Western subjects were introduced too late (with the result that most students left school without studying them).

To solve the first problem, they recommended that Chinese be taught along more practical lines, although they saw 'no reason why this practical instruction should not be based on the Confucian and Mencian Classics' (ibid.: 501). They stressed, in any case, that they had no wish to banish the classics as such a move would constitute 'an unnecessary challenge to the fundamental principles of Chinese social life' (ibid.: 501). The Committee's emphasis on the need for a more practical orientation recalls the approach of Frederick Stewart, who valued the classics primarily for the potential they offered for Chinese language learning (see 4.3.3). To solve the second problem, the Committee proposed that Western knowledge be introduced from the lowest class upwards. Although

they emphasised that they had no plans to abolish the traditional curriculum, the Committee clearly placed a higher value on the study of Western knowledge, which in turn was more important than English teaching (which they were prepared to permit as a ‘special subject’ in the higher classes): ‘Very important as the study of English is, Western Knowledge is still more so; and where the two studies cannot be conducted at the same time, Western Knowledge must take precedence’ (ibid.: 501).

6.4.4 Wood’s Despatch revisited

The Committee’s report was the last formal statement of British aims in the areas of language policy and practice during our period. From the perspective of developments in Hong Kong, the report (in one sense) marked a return to the principles that had guided Frederick Stewart during the formative years of the 1860s and 1870s, namely that it was essential that students study Chinese thoroughly during their early years of schooling; that this study be practical; that they demonstrate a sound foundation in Chinese before embarking on English studies; and that their proficiency in Chinese be maintained and improved during the course of their studies. In another sense, however, the report signalled a significant shift away from Stewart’s policies and practices in that it recognised the need for curricula, materials and methods – for both content and language subjects – to be tailored to the special requirements of students of English as a foreign language in Hong Kong.

From the perspective of developments in the Empire, the report’s recommendations on the content and media of education largely accorded with the principles set out in Wood’s landmark Despatch of 1854 (which was cited by the Committee, though not in connection with language policy). Like Wood, the Committee stated that the fundamental

objective of British policy should be the diffusion of Western knowledge, and that this learning should be imparted by means of both the vernacular and English languages (the former at primary level and a mixture of the two at secondary level). As we pointed out in 2.1.8, the education system in Hong Kong on 30 June 1997 still bore Wood's imprint: primary education was conducted mainly in Cantonese and written Chinese (but with ELT introduced much earlier than either Wood or the Committee had envisaged), while the media of secondary education were English, Cantonese and written Chinese. At the level of policy, the medium of oral and written instruction in 'Western' subjects in the Anglo-Chinese schools was supposed to be English, while Chinese subjects, which were intended to develop first-language proficiency, were supposed to be (and evidently were) conducted in Chinese. At the level of practice, however, the usual media of oral instruction in content subjects in the Anglo-Chinese stream, including those schools that would 'remain' English-medium after 1998, were Cantonese and Cantonese-English mixed code, while English continued to be the main language of materials, assignments and examinations (Evans, 2000b, 2002). As had been the case a century before, most secondary students in Hong Kong during the era of mass Anglo-Chinese education (1978-1998) did not possess the requisite proficiency to study modern subjects effectively in English; nor had they received sufficient instruction in written Chinese during their schooling to be regarded as fully proficient upon graduation. The result was what Lau (1997) has termed Hong Kong's 'language malaise'. It was this malaise that the SAR government sought to address in its controversial policy to force most Anglo-Chinese schools to switch to Chinese-medium. It was this malaise, and particularly the belief that its historical origins had not been fully explored, that provided the initial inspiration for the present study, whose conclusions we now draw.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

This study has examined the nature, purposes and consequences of colonial language policies and practices in Hong Kong education between 1842 and 1913. In particular, it has analysed the changing attitudes of the colonial and metropolitan governments towards the promotion of English-language education (*vis-à-vis* Chinese education) during this formative period in the colony's educational history. This chapter summarises the study's principal findings in relation to the four research questions posed in 1.4.1, and then moves on to assess their broader significance in the light of the two underlying purposes outlined in 1.3, namely that the study might enrich our knowledge of language policies and practices in British colonial education, and also that it might illuminate our understanding of the central issues and problems in language education that have confronted policy-makers and practitioners in Hong Kong since the 1970s.

The first question concerns the nature of colonial language policies and practices in Hong Kong. On the evidence of the textual and statistical data presented in Chapters Three to Six, it would appear that neither Phillipson's (1992) claim that the British imposed English on their colonial subjects (and in the process rode roughshod over the indigenous languages) nor Pennycook's (2002a,b) view that the British often sought to accomplish their imperial objectives by promoting conservative vernacular education presents a complete picture of language policy and practice in the Empire. One of the limitations of these accounts is that 'British policy' tends to be fixed in nature and purpose, and frozen over time and space. This tendency is particularly evident in Phillipson's study, in which it is claimed that Macaulay's pro-English 'strategy' remained in place across the far-flung

Empire from the 1830s until well into the twentieth century. Although Pennycook displays a greater willingness to acknowledge the complexity of colonial policy, like Phillipson he fails to examine change over time (e.g. his problems with chronology in 6.2.3) and variation over space (e.g. his apparent assumption that the policy of ‘playing safe’ in Malaya was genetically linked to the ‘policy’ of promoting Confucian education in Hong Kong).

The fundamental flaw in the accounts of Phillipson and Pennycook is that although they have definite views on the nature and purposes of colonial policy, they have elected not to carry out systematic historical research into the various contexts about which they write (and, in fairness, neither claims to have done so since their respective purposes do not apparently require it). One consequence of their reluctance to conduct detailed case studies, however, is that they take little account of the various agencies that were engaged in the field of colonial education. When they discuss ‘British policy’ it is therefore not clear whether they are referring to language policy in the schools operated by the government, or whether they are referring to policy in the education system as a whole; nor is it clear whether this ‘British policy’ reflected directives originating in Whitehall, or whether it resulted from independent initiatives by colonial officials (and other interested parties) in the periphery.

These questions necessarily arise when we attempt to characterise colonial language policy in Hong Kong between 1842 and 1913. If we wished to venture a general summary of developments during this period, it might be to the effect that the colony’s school system provided opportunities for native students to receive an education solely in Chinese, solely in English or in a mixture of the two languages. Students who opted to receive a mixed-medium education could attend schools teaching mainly in Chinese (with English taught as a subject), schools teaching English and Chinese in roughly equal measures or schools

teaching mainly in English (with Chinese taught as a subject). When considering policy and practice in the Anglo-Chinese schools (viz. the second and third categories of mixed-medium school), it is worth recalling that the actual medium of classroom communication in English subjects was often Cantonese. To muddy the waters still further, Hong Kong's education system during this period also offered scope for students to attend schools teaching in French, Portuguese, Latin, Spanish and German (usually combined with Chinese or English).

The point here is that language education in the colony's schools was so complex, varied and changing that it may not be particularly illuminating to offer a definitive verdict on what constituted 'colonial language policy' in Hong Kong (certainly of the generalised, cut-and-dried kind often advanced in 'critical' studies). As we observed in Chapter Six, it would be misleading to regard language policy in Hong Kong simply as a one-way street signposted either English or vernacular. The evidence suggests that the colony's education system provided opportunities for Chinese students to attend a variety of schools (in terms of level, sector and affiliation) teaching in a variety of media. Since school attendance was not compulsory, nobody was coerced (at least by the authorities) into studying a language which they had no need or desire to learn (still less be culturally compromised by a sinister 'hidden curriculum'); nor was anybody denied access (on political or pedagogical grounds) to teaching in a language which they felt might be educationally or occupationally beneficial (although some may have been prevented on economic grounds since some of the higher level schools charged modest tuition fees). However, lest we form the impression that the British somehow allowed a beneficent system to develop in Hong Kong, it needs to be pointed out – and this emerges strongly from the sources – that the quality of education on offer in most schools was not especially high; but in this respect (as in many others) the

situation in Hong Kong mirrored the equally deficient conditions that prevailed in Victorian England.

It is of course possible to draw instructive general conclusions about the nature of language policies and practices in Hong Kong, but to do so we need to examine these in relation to the three sectors – government, aided and private – which constituted the colony's education system during this period. Throughout this study we have maintained that British attitudes towards the English and vernacular languages are perhaps best gauged by analysing policies and practices in the government schools. If we take the 1842-1913 period as a whole, it would seem that the colonial and metropolitan authorities sought to promote education in both Chinese and English, the former at elementary level and a mixture of the two at higher levels. The evidence suggests that by the late 1870s English had become the *de facto* object of colonial policy, and that by the mid-1890s it had attained *de jure* status. Although the colonial regime's priorities clearly lay in the direction of English teaching in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was generally at pains – often through the prompting of the Colonial Office – to stress that English should not be studied at the expense of Chinese, and in particular that students should not embark on their English studies without a firm foundation in their first language and that their proficiency in Chinese should be maintained during the course of their English studies. In essence, these were the principles of Wood's Despatch.

As we saw in 6.1.1, for much of the period under review the government operated schools where the content and methods of education were similar to those employed on the Chinese mainland. Although over the years the authorities engrafted elementary instruction in Western subjects on to the core Confucian curriculum, and attempted (with limited success) to curb the traditional emphasis on rote memorisation, the colonial regime was

generally reluctant to reform the vernacular schools along Western lines. Even towards the end of our period, when the Committee on Education (1902) recommended that Western learning should be the focus of instruction in the Chinese stream, they took pains to emphasise that they had no wish to overthrow the traditional curriculum. Although officials in Hong Kong (like their counterparts in India) were convinced of the superiority of Western knowledge, ideas and methods, they were unwilling to enforce them in the vernacular schools, and this was largely because they were wary of the potentially unfortunate consequences which might flow from ‘slamming the door on indigenous traditions of learning’.

From the early 1860s onwards, the focus of attention and funding in the government sector was the Anglo-Chinese stream, which, by the close of our period, comprised Queen’s College, Belilios Public School and several district schools. Although the *raison d’être* of the Anglo-Chinese schools was to teach English, (as their name indicates) these institutions also provided instruction in Chinese. When considering the nature of language policies and practices in the public sector, it is particularly instructive to summarise developments at Queen’s since this was always regarded as the colony’s premier school. As we saw in Chapter Four, during Stewart’s Headmastership the curriculum was divided equally into Chinese studies, which centred on the Confucian classics, and English studies, which were modelled on the elementary school in Victorian England. During his successor’s years at the helm, the level and scope of the English studies side of the (by now unbalanced) curriculum were extended by the addition of the subjects and examinations of the English grammar school. Neither the elementary nor the grammar school curriculum was adapted to the needs of students of English as a foreign language in Hong Kong, although there is evidence – the apparent prevalence of mixed-mode teaching being the most significant – that teachers at

Queen's were forced to modify their classroom practices in order to make 'English education' comprehensible to their Chinese students.

An analysis of language policies and practices in the public sector therefore reveals that the government provided opportunities for those who wished to receive an elementary education in their mother tongue and also for those who wished to receive a bilingual education at higher levels. As we saw in Chapter Six, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries witnessed a shift towards an English-oriented policy in the public sector, which resulted in a gradual contraction of enrolments in the vernacular stream and of time for Chinese studies in the Anglo-Chinese stream. Although these developments might be interpreted as a 'linguicist' colonial regime riding roughshod over indigenous traditions of learning, the administration's policy of withdrawing from vernacular education was founded on the assumption that the missionary societies would take up responsibility for mother-tongue schooling once they were satisfied with the provisions of the grant-in-aid scheme, as proved to be the case after 1879.

When considering language policies and practices in the aided sector, we need to take account of the Committee on Education's (1902: 495) observation that the grant schools were 'the results of various and disconnected efforts extending over nearly sixty years'. Although their presence in Hong Kong was intimately tied to the fact of British rule, it would be misleading to regard the missionary societies simply as the religious arm of the imperial enterprise. The missionaries who set up schools in Hong Kong during this period came from various parts of Europe and North America, and represented a variety of Protestant denominations and Catholic orders. Although they shared a common purpose, to proselytise through education, they were not always united in the means by which this

should be achieved (see 4.2.3), nor was their relationship with the government invariably harmonious (see 5.1.3).

Before the introduction of the scheme, the mission schools were essentially private schools in that they received no financial support from the government. As Table 3 reveals, for much of this time their fortunes remained at a low ebb. In the years after 1879, however, the mission schools played an increasingly important role in the colony's education system. By the 1890s, enrolments in the aided sector significantly outweighed those in the public sector, and as Figure 4 demonstrates, the vast majority of mission-school students were receiving an education solely in Chinese. In general, the Protestant societies from the United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland and America concentrated on vernacular education (and to some extent on Anglo-Chinese education), while the Catholic societies from France and Italy tended to focus on purely English education (since their schools were mainly intended for European and Eurasian children). The implementation of the grant-in-aid scheme thus meant that the 'colonial education system' (i.e. the government and mission schools) was potentially able to cater for the linguistic and educational needs of most classes of Chinese students in Hong Kong.

There were some, of course, who – perhaps with good reason – had no wish to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the colonial schools. In a sense, the *laissez-faire* system that evolved in Hong Kong before 1913 also accommodated the needs of those who wished to receive an education completely free from foreign influence or interference. Throughout the period under review, a substantial number of children attended schools that were entirely beyond the regulatory ambit of the colonial authorities. The majority of these schools were Chinese-medium.

Thus far we have been considering the nature of colonial language policies and practices in Hong Kong. We turn now to the second question posed in 1.4.1, which concerns changes in policies and practices during the 1842-1913 period. Since the aided and private sectors were so diffuse, this question is best answered by tracing developments in the government sector. When we view the period as a whole, it is possible to identify three reasonably distinct phases in the evolution of language policy in the public education system. These three phases correspond to the periods examined in Chapters Three (1842-1859), Four (1860-1876) and Six (1883-1913). Chapter Five (1877-1882) essentially concerns the transition from phase two to phase three.

The first two decades of British rule might be termed the vernacular-oriented phase, for during this period the government chose to support – initially with modest individual grants – the Island’s Chinese ‘village’ schools. By the late 1850s, the Education Committee had assumed direct control of a significant number of native schools, and had engrafted Bible study, Western knowledge and – in a handful of cases – rudimentary ELT on to the Confucian curriculum. It was the apparent failure of the experiment to introduce ELT that led to Legge’s proposal to ‘centralise’ the teaching of English in a model Anglo-Chinese school.

The establishment of the Central School in the early 1860s inaugurated what might be called the bilingual phase in the colony’s educational history. During the Stewart era, the government attached equal importance to the teaching of English and Chinese. In his capacity as Inspector of Schools, Stewart presided over a system wholly directed towards the promotion of mother-tongue education, while in his role as Headmaster of the Central School, he devised a curriculum that offered equal space for English and Chinese studies. It is worth recalling, however, that Cantonese was extensively used in English subjects, and so

when considering language practices in the public sector as a whole (i.e. the vernacular schools and the Central School), it would appear that the balance of power during the 1860s and 1870s was still tilted in favour of Chinese.

As we saw in Chapter Five, Stewart's policies and practices came under scrutiny during Hennessy's Governorship, and this set in motion a shift towards an English-oriented policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During this third phase, English teaching was introduced in a number of Chinese district schools, an Anglo-Chinese school for girls was founded, a more commodious building was constructed for Queen's College, Stewart's bifurcated curriculum gradually became skewed in favour of English, and two small English schools were established for British children. During the same period, the once dominant Chinese stream underwent a period of terminal decline.

The gradual adoption of an English-oriented policy stemmed from the perception that the government's English-teaching institutions, and particularly Queen's College, were failing to produce linguistically proficient graduates. At each turning point in the evolution of the new policy – the Education Conference (1878), the plague (1894), the Committee on Education (1902) – the colonial authorities introduced a series of measures that were designed to address what they considered to be the causes of the apparent failure of English-language education. These measures involved either realigning the roles of the two languages in favour of English (e.g. decisions to make Chinese optional, to reduce the number of hours for its study, or, as was the case at Queen's between 1896 and 1902, to abolish it completely) or attempting to improve the quality of English-language education (e.g. decisions to introduce modern methods of language teaching, to import native-speaking teachers, to develop practical and relevant curricula).

Some accounts of language policy in the Empire, especially those which contend that the British ‘imposed’ English on their Asian and African subjects, (unwittingly) create the impression that each newly acquired dependency was a *tabula rasa* upon which the colonial authorities could easily inscribe their linguistic will. However, when we examine the evolution of language policy in Hong Kong between 1842 and 1913, it is immediately apparent that the three phases outlined above were not accompanied by the creation of large numbers of new schools to support the new policy. In keeping with the British preference for ‘feeling their way’ and (particularly) for avoiding substantial expenditure, the Hong Kong authorities generally sought to develop the existing (allegedly imperfect) system rather than begin *de novo* when initiating a policy shift.

This is illustrated by the history of Queen’s College. As we have seen, the government flagship grew out of five existing Chinese schools in the early 1860s, and during the next three decades was gradually transformed from an elementary vernacular school providing optional (and free) teaching in the rudiments of English into a fee-paying English grammar school offering instruction in (*inter alia*) Latin, English history and Shakespeare. By the mid-1890s, save for Dictation and Translation, Chinese studies had been completely removed from the curriculum (although they were subsequently revived). The decision to concentrate on English-language education in a ‘model’ school was largely prompted by disappointment in official circles with the quality of English teaching and learning in the existing government schools; half a century later, dissatisfaction with the quality of English teaching and learning in the by now substantially enlarged Anglo-Chinese stream was even more intense; but, of course, this was still rather mild compared to that felt by the official, business and professional communities in the modern era.

Like their counterparts in the late twentieth century, educators and administrators in Hong Kong during the 1842-1913 period implemented a variety of measures in an effort to address the ever deepening 'language malaise'. The evidence suggests that the initiative behind these reforms invariably came from the colonial establishment in Hong Kong rather than from Whitehall. By colonial establishment, we mean not only government officials, such as influential governors and educators (e.g. MacDonnell, Hennessy, Robinson, Lobscheid, Stewart, Eitel, Wright), but also prominent missionaries and merchants with close ties to the administration (e.g. Gutzlaff, Smith, Legge, Raimondi, Mackenzie, Belilios). It might be noted that the *dramatis personae* here includes three Germans, an Italian and an Indian, in addition to the more predictable cast of Englishmen, Irishmen and Scotsmen.

The evidence suggests that the Colonial Office played a generally passive role in the development of language policy during this period. Although major policy initiatives ultimately required the Secretary of State's approval, in practice the colonial government usually proceeded with their implementation before this was received. In general, the metropolitan authorities endorsed initiatives taken in Hong Kong, even when they were highly sceptical about their desirability or feasibility. Although internal minutes in the Colonial Office records are often penetrating and amusingly pithy (as befitted their confidential status), the despatches that were eventually sent out in the Colonial Secretary's name tended to be circumspect, circumlocutory and, at times, evasive.

It will immediately be apparent from our *dramatis personae* above that the colony's Chinese community were denied a role in the decision-making process for much of the period under review (as they were, of course, in most other areas of government activity). While it is true that Ng Choy and several of the Central School's Chinese masters gave evidence to the Education Commission (1880-1882), it was not until Sir Ho Kai's

participation in the Committee on Education (1901-1902), alongside two British officials, that a member of the Chinese elite was granted a voice in the formulation of language policy.

Although the Chinese were generally excluded from the policy-making process, it would be misleading to suggest that they had no influence on the nature and direction of language education during our period. The evidence suggests that the attitudes and attainments of Chinese students in relation to the study and use of English were significant factors shaping policies and practices. Since school attendance was not compulsory, the health of the Anglo-Chinese stream was entirely dependent upon the willingness of native students to attend (and, if necessary, pay fees to) Queen's College, Belilios Public School and the district schools. While there is no doubt that a considerable demand existed for Anglo-Chinese schooling, it appears that this (largely pragmatic) interest in English did not fully emerge until the second half of our period. The testimony of Stewart (4.2.3) and Raimondi (4.3.2) indicates that the Chinese community initially viewed the English-language initiatives of the government and the missions with a good deal of scepticism, and as Wright subsequently observed, while demand for English teaching remained lukewarm, the Central School was reluctant to charge fees (*YD*, June 1920: 204). It was only when the political and economic structure became entrenched, and the role of English within that structure fully recognised, that certain sections of the Chinese community began to realise that it would be in their interest to learn (just enough) English to participate in that structure.

A familiar theme in the literature on language in Hong Kong education in the era before the advent of mass Anglo-Chinese schooling is that English-language education was the preserve of the 'elite' or, as Lin (1997: 281) puts it, 'the well-to-do'. In critical accounts of British policy during this period (i.e. 1850s-1960s), it is either stated or implied that the

colonial regime deliberately reserved a prestigious form of schooling for a class of Chinese who already enjoyed a privileged position in native society, and (further) that the British neglected schooling – either in English or the mother tongue – for the more deserving lower classes. The elite were thus afforded the means of preserving or enhancing their social and economic status, while the masses were denied the opportunity to rise in the colonial milieu.

This reading of colonial policy does not entirely accord with the findings of the present study, which suggest that the class of Chinese that habitually sent its sons to the government Anglo-Chinese schools was not the traditional elite but the petty bourgeoisie, although it is also worth noting that around a third of the pupils in the district schools were from the ‘labouring classes’ (Committee on Education, 1902: 494). The evidence suggests that the Chinese elite, who in any case were not well represented in urban Hong Kong, sent their sons to Canton for a Confucian education, which was essential if they wished to pursue the traditional path to power and prestige in Chinese society (Luk, 1982). By the late nineteenth century, the shopkeepers, traders, artisans and indeed labourers of urban Hong Kong had apparently concluded that one of the keys to social and economic mobility (or at least security) in colonial Hong Kong (and beyond) was a degree of proficiency in English. Although they had little to do with the foreign regime (and doubtless bitterly resented its discriminatory attitudes and policies), these groups – unlike the traditional elite – owed their existence to British colonialism in that their economic interests were tied (directly or indirectly) to the foreign trade. The point here then is that, rather than help consolidate the status of an existing elite (as is sometimes claimed), English-language education may have been one of the means – endeavour, enterprise and acumen being others – by which hitherto marginal groups in Chinese society were able to attain positions of social and economic

standing in the new and, in some respects, meritocratic Chinese society that was emerging in Hong Kong and in the treaty ports.

The evidence suggests that the sons of the petty bourgeoisie attended the government Anglo-Chinese schools quite willingly, that they worked patiently and diligently, but (understandably) without any real enthusiasm or interest (*YD*, June 1899: 11-12). For the most part, they wanted to acquire – as rapidly as possible and for employment purposes only – a smattering of the *language* of an English education. As H.H. Wilson had foreseen, this class of native students (unlike the traditional elite) generally had neither the time nor interest to appreciate or benefit from a complete course of Western studies; nor, as Eitel pointed out, did they possess the requisite proficiency in English to study these subjects effectively in a foreign language. Nevertheless, despite these unpromising conditions, pupils in Hong Kong (and elsewhere) were required to take the same subjects, use the same books and sit the same examinations as their counterparts in England. The sharply conflicting linguistic and educational aspirations of (on the one hand) perhaps the majority of students in the Anglo-Chinese stream and (on the other) of colonial policymakers such as Stewart and Wright lay at the heart of many of the language problems that afflicted Hong Kong education during the nineteenth century, and (as we saw in 6.4) it was only towards the end of our period that the authorities began to address the fact that students' language-learning needs might not be especially well served by reconstructing the Wars of the Roses or by parsing Shakespeare's sonnets.

The findings in relation to the first two research questions therefore indicate that not only was there considerable variation in language policies and practices within each sector, but also that these policies and practices gradually evolved in response to changing needs, demands, influences and circumstances. These points need to be borne in mind when we

turn to the third – and perhaps most contentious – question posed in 1.4.1, which concerns the purposes of colonial language policies and practices in Hong Kong.

Critical studies of education in the Empire invariably contend that language policies and practices were designed to serve the political, economic, social and cultural interests of the British colonisers. As we have already noted, one of the limitations of these accounts, such as those by Phillipson (1992) and Pennycook (2002a,b), is that the ‘purpose’ of ‘British policy’, be it English or vernacular in orientation, tends to be presented in one-dimensional terms. (*En passant*, it is interesting that its very nature is open to such sharply divergent interpretations, for it might be supposed that what actually constituted ‘British policy’ in each dependency could be ascertained with a high degree of accuracy by examining what Phillipson calls ‘the basic statistics of colonial education’. Admittedly, the more slippery question of ‘purposes’ is much less easy to research and therefore to determine.) While a good deal of evidence unsurprisingly exists to support the view that colonial language policies and practices were often framed with the intention of promoting Britain’s imperial interests in Africa and Asia, the textual data presented Chapters Three to Six, while confirming in some respects the ‘colonialist conspiracy’ thesis, indicate that pedagogical considerations, which critics tend to ignore or downplay, were also influential.

When assessing the purposes of language policies and practices we are faced with the same problem that we encountered when summarising our findings in relation to the first two research questions, namely that policies and practices in Hong Kong’s schools were neither as homogeneous nor as static as critics make them out to be. Given this variation and mutability, if we wish to draw instructive conclusions about their purposes we need to pitch our analysis at the sector level rather than at the nebulous ‘British policy’ level found in the accounts of Phillipson and Pennycook.

Unfortunately, little is known – and perhaps is ever likely to be known – about language education in the (mainly) Chinese-run private schools. We do know, however, that these schools played an important role in educational provision, for in the early twentieth century enrolments in the private vernacular stream exceeded those in the government and government-aided sectors (Committee on Education, 1902: 497). Given the lack of evidence about policy and practice in the private sector, we can only speculate on the motives which inspired Chinese individuals and groups to establish vernacular and mixed-medium schools. It would be reasonable to suppose that the most likely motives were financial and educational. Since the government was apparently content to allow the private schools to carry on their work without any form of official interference, we must assume that the authorities were satisfied that the teaching provided in these schools was unlikely to pose a political threat to the British. However, once the colonial regime became aware, in the aftermath of the 1911 revolution in China, that the private vernacular schools were promoting pro-Chinese and anti-colonial propaganda, it enacted the Education Ordinance (1913), which gave the government supervisory powers over the private sector, a measure that was unprecedented in the Empire.

Unlike the private sector, the nature and purposes of language policies and practices in the aided sector are more fully documented, at least in the sense that a considerable amount of relevant primary data is likely to exist in the archives of the various missionary societies that were active in Hong Kong during our period. Thus far, however, it appears that few scholars, certainly in the field of applied linguistics, have opted to examine this (admittedly scattered) material with a view to determining the attitudes of the missions towards the teaching of Chinese and English in the colony. Given the pivotal role which the Christian missions played in the provision of vernacular, English and mixed-medium

education in Hong Kong and in the Empire generally, this would seem to be a potentially interesting area of inquiry, and one that would likely expose even further the essential fragility of many critical accounts of 'British policy'.

The absence of empirical studies of language in missionary education in Hong Kong means that we can draw only very general conclusions about the motives which underlay policies and practices in the mission schools. What we do know, of course, is that in establishing their schools the missionary societies were primarily motivated by the desire to evangelise. For the Protestant societies, this religious objective was best accomplished by providing elementary education in Chinese. Their thinking in this respect was entirely understandable: the mother tongue was likely to prove a considerably more effective means of spreading the Gospel than a remote and not especially well loved foreign language like English. The adoption of a pro-vernacular policy in the Protestant schools thus sprang from the belief that it would materially aid their fundamental objective of converting the Chinese to Christianity. Although Bible study (together with Western knowledge) constituted a central element in the curriculum of the Protestant schools, it is important to note that these schools also provided teaching in traditional Chinese subjects, for as Leung (1989) points out, (whether they liked it or not) the mission schools had to offer instruction in the Confucian classics in order to attract students. The Protestant vernacular schools thus appear to have provided a (perhaps not entirely comfortable) amalgam of religious and secular instruction in both the Western and Chinese traditions.

It seems unlikely that the Protestant Chinese schools were the vehicles for what Pennycook (2002a) claims was a politically motivated policy on the part of the colonial regime to cultivate 'docile bodies' (6.2.3). Since the Protestant schools were affiliated to a variety of societies from Britain, Europe and America, and since each had its own particular

educational aims, it is difficult to see how the British authorities could have forged these disparate (and often competing) organisations into a common alliance bent upon perpetrating a sinister plot designed to nurture loyal and obedient subjects for the colonial government. There is no doubt that the mission schools were often vehicles for linguistic and cultural imperialism (as indeed we saw in 3.3.4), but it seems likely that their policies and practices in this regard were more a reflection of the beliefs and attitudes of individual missionaries, and more generally of the societies to which they were affiliated, than those of colonial officials. Although the Protestant missions harboured their fair share of bigots, they were also served by men of high calibre and liberal instincts, who not only possessed an appreciative understanding of Chinese language and culture, but who also approached their religious and educational work with a genuine desire to enlighten and improve native society. From a modern perspective, such motives are inevitably regarded as being suspect, for, however well meaning the intentions of individual missionaries, their work took place within a context tainted by the evil of Western imperialism. Altruism and exploitation were thus two sides of the same imperial coin, or rather opposite extremes of a continuum of Western attitudes towards the colonised.

The most revealing evidence about the purposes of colonial policies and practices in Hong Kong is derived from a study of language education in the government schools. When assessing the administration's intentions, it is worth repeating that language policy and practice in the public sector were neither homogeneous nor static. It would therefore be misleading to suggest or imply – as critics sometimes do – that a single underlying purpose lay behind decisions to promote (or restrict) the teaching of English and Chinese in the government schools.

Let us first consider the motives which inspired the government to promote Chinese education. As we have seen, during the initial phase in the evolution of government language policy, the authorities chose to support the existing Chinese schools rather than the Anglo-Chinese mission schools. As discussed in 3.4.1, the adoption of a vernacular-oriented policy during the 1840s and 1850s appears to have been motivated by two main factors: the metropolitan government's desire to avoid the disputes that inevitably accompanied the disbursement of public funds to religious organisations and the colonial government's belief that it would be a means of 'conciliating' its new – and by no means acquiescent – Chinese subjects. The administration's attempt to secure its subjects' confidence and gratitude in this way offers an early instance of the use of language policy for overtly political purposes.

Although the government's (actually very modest) support for Chinese education bears out Pennycook's (2002a,b) view that pro-vernacular policies were often motivated by political considerations, there is no evidence to suggest that these early initiatives involved the provision of a specially tailored 'conservative' form of Confucian education. The authorities simply provided grants for a number of existing native schools, which (like all elementary schools in China) happened to offer the standard Confucian curriculum. While it is true that the Education Committee attempted to reform the vernacular schools during the 1850s, it sought to accomplish this by engrafting the study of Western knowledge, the Bible and English on to the traditional curriculum.

During the last four decades of the nineteenth century, the content and methods of education in the government Chinese schools were essentially the same as those in schools on the mainland. Following the adoption of a secularist policy and the opening of the Central School in the early 1860s, religious instruction and English teaching were abolished in the vernacular schools, whose teaching henceforth centred on the Confucian classics and

(to a very limited extent) elementary Western knowledge. Again, there is no evidence to suggest that the government engaged in a sinister plot to render the traditional curriculum even more conservative in order to promote 'docility'. In fact, the sources indicate that the authorities generally wished to reform the Chinese schools (e.g. by providing more space for Western subjects and by encouraging 'modern' teaching methods) but, as we have seen, they failed to push through these innovations mainly because they were reluctant to tamper with indigenous traditions of learning. Although the authorities' caution was in some respects politically motivated, their approach to vernacular education, which amounted to a grudging acceptance of the status quo, differed significantly from the policy that Pennycook claims was pursued in Hong Kong, namely that Orientalist officials actively promoted Confucian education as a means of social control. In a sense, it is pointless debating the issue as the evidence clearly shows that the government was actually withdrawing from Chinese education during the very period in which Pennycook claims that the politically motivated vernacular policy was in force.

In his 2002b version, Pennycook suggests that in acknowledging that the British did after all promote vernacular education he is expressing a view that would be unpalatable in his usual constituency, which automatically associates colonial policy with the promotion of English. However, not wishing to appear a heretic, Pennycook hastens to point out that the British promoted Chinese education for 'very clear political reasons' (ibid.: 15). What is understandably missing from the discussion is any possibility that the British might have promoted mother-tongue education because they believed it to be educationally desirable, and yet the findings of the present study suggest that these were important considerations for policy-makers in Hong Kong. As we have seen, Stewart held it to be an axiom that a student was not educated unless he possessed a thorough grounding in his own language

and (further) that proficiency in the first language was an essential basis for the acquisition of a foreign language. We have also seen that officials in Whitehall repeatedly stated that the provision of vernacular education was a fundamental government duty. (Indeed, the mother-tongue mantra is repeated so often that at times one suspects that their despatches were mainly intended to protect the Colonial Office from future charges of linguistic imperialism.)

Let us now consider the motives which inspired the authorities to promote English. The evidence suggests that the provision of English-language education was generally tied (directly or indirectly) to Britain's imperial interests in the region. As we saw in 3.3.2, the administration's support for the early mission schools was wholly motivated by the Foreign Office's need for interpreters after the First Opium War. The introduction of ELT in the vernacular schools in 1853 was also (partly) inspired by political considerations, in this case the desire to forge a 'bond of union' between the European rulers and their none-too-amenable subjects. This ambitious task, it will be recalled, was to be accomplished by 'two Chinese lads' on a combined salary of £5 per annum.

Although the establishment of the Central School was mainly prompted by Legge's desire to improve the quality of English teaching, he was also aware of the advantages which the British might derive from the school's 'influence' in China. During the first three decades of direct government involvement in English-language education, pronouncements on the purposes of language policy tended to avoid explicit reference to political or economic factors, and instead cautiously pointed to the benefits which might flow from the spread of Western knowledge and ideas. From Hennessy's time onwards, however, statements about policy objectives became increasingly explicit. At the heart of these pronouncements, particularly those made by Governor Robinson during the 1890s, was the

belief that the diffusion of English would facilitate the advancement of British interests and influence in the Far East. In other words, the adoption of an English-oriented policy had a clear political and economic rationale.

It would be misleading, however, to suggest that English-language policy was invariably framed with imperial needs solely in mind. A consistent – if not always dominant – theme in British discourse on language policy was the belief that Chinese students might benefit intellectually from the study of English. The introduction of English in 1853, for example, was founded not only on the idea that it might help unite the new society that was emerging in Hong Kong, but also on its inherent ‘utility as a mental exercise’. Stewart also regarded the acquisition of English as an intrinsically valuable process. As we saw in 5.3.5, the Scotsman saw himself as an educationalist with a ‘higher duty’ to discharge than simply training up cheap functionaries for government or business (as a ‘mere’ language instructor might). Even towards the end of our period, when the colonial regime’s political and economic motives became increasingly transparent, policy documents continued to stress the educational benefits which students might derive from learning English (and its attendant body of learning).

The study’s findings in relation to the question of purposes thus reveal that language policies in Hong Kong education were inspired by a range of motives, the most important being (it would seem) financial, religious, political, economic, cultural, and educational. With respect to the public sector, the true barometer of British attitudes, there is no evidence to substantiate Pennycook’s contention that the authorities intended to cultivate ‘docile bodies’ by promoting conservative Chinese education. However, as documented in 6.2, there is a good deal of evidence to support Phillipson’s claim that the British promoted the study and use of English to suit their own imperial ends. What neither Pennycook nor

Phillipson properly acknowledges, however, is that in most cases colonial language policies had what their designers considered to be a worthy pedagogical justification (in addition to what modern critics see as a rather less commendable political or economic one). What also tends to be missing from critical accounts is any compelling evidence that the base objectives which (it is claimed) underlay British policies were actually realised. As we have seen, in the late nineteenth century the British pursued an Anglicist policy with the explicit intention of spreading the English language and (more generally) British modes of living and thought. However, as detailed in 6.3, the evidence suggests that the English-oriented policy largely failed to achieve these objectives. When assessing colonial policies and practices it is therefore important not only to examine their changing nature and purposes, but also their results; and this was the final question posed in 1.4.1.

As we noted in 2.4, one of the dominant themes of reports on colonial education is the sense of disappointment felt by educators and administrators with the results of English-language education. The present study has revealed that this sense of frustration was also apparent in Hong Kong throughout the period under review, and particularly of course in the early twentieth century, when the Committee on Education conducted a wide-ranging investigation into what was perceived to be a 'defective' system. At the heart of this dissatisfaction was the belief that language standards in the Anglo-Chinese schools were not commensurate with the time, money and attention devoted to English-language education. There was also disappointment at the schools' failure to exercise an anglicising influence on the colony's Chinese community. Understandably, such sentiments tend to be restricted to confidential records, such as those of the educationalist Lancelot Forster (?1925: 5-6), who wondered whether Hong Kong would ever be anything more than a commercial community:

... can it ever become a centre for the diffusion of British ideals and British culture, a place where an intellectual entente can be established. The attempt

has been made. Schools, very efficient ones, have been established, a university has been founded, but in spite of that, there has been no conspicuous adhesion to the British point of view. (ibid.: 7-8)

The evidence therefore suggests that the policy to promote the study and use of English was perceived to have failed in its aim of nurturing a sizeable corps of proficient Anglophiles. Instead, students left the Anglo-Chinese schools as soon as they had acquired a smattering of English, and with attitudes towards the British that were rarely more positive than coolly indifferent.

Why then were the results of English-language education (from the authorities' perspective) so disappointing? When considering the various factors that militated against the successful implementation of the Anglicist policy, the crucial variable appears to have been the attitudes of the students. In seeking to explain the schools' failure to produce graduates imbued with 'Anglo-Saxon ideas', we should look first at the motives of the students who opted to attend the Anglo-Chinese schools rather than at flaws in the content, methods and conditions of education. The evidence suggests that these students were not as malleable or intellectually inert as critical scholars unwittingly make them out to be. Unlike modern critics, they had a clear understanding of their own needs and interests, and they approached their English studies with the intention of satisfying these needs and interests, and nothing more. Rather than lie back passively and think of England, they extracted what they wanted from their studies, deflected everything else, and then quickly departed. As Brutt-Griffler (2002) points out, a language cannot be imposed by force (like martial law or a curfew). If the colonial regime had succeeded in its attempt to exercise English linguistic imperialism in the Hong Kong context, it would have required the collaboration and compliance of the students. Like their counterparts elsewhere, however, most students in Hong Kong chose to give the (actually half-baked) colonialist plot a very wide berth indeed.

While the attitudes of the students were arguably crucial, a number of other factors militated against effective language education in Hong Kong during our period. These may be summarised as follows: (1) students were allowed to enter the Anglo-Chinese schools without a firm foundation in Chinese; (2) the emphasis on English in the Anglo-Chinese curriculum prevented students from developing high levels of proficiency in their first language; (3) English was introduced as the medium of instruction for Western subjects before students had attained the requisite cognitive and linguistic threshold levels to benefit from their studies; (4) the content and methods of instruction and assessment used in both Western subjects and English language were not adapted to the needs of non-native speakers of English; (5) teachers were forced to mix and switch between English and Cantonese in order to explain the linguistically and culturally inappropriate teaching materials; (6) as the British were never entirely clear whether the object of English-language policy was the teaching of content subjects in English (EMI) or the teaching of English as a subject (ELT), they failed to develop a principled approach to the teaching of English as a foreign language; (7) the authorities made no real effort to address the chronic shortage of proficient, well-qualified English teachers; (8) government parsimony meant that English was taught and learned in overcrowded classrooms housed in ill-equipped and often unsanitary buildings. All these factors conspired to ensure that perhaps the majority of students left Hong Kong's Anglo-Chinese schools with a flimsy foundation in Chinese language and culture overlain with a thin and imperfect veneer of English.

When we view the 'language malaise' in Hong Kong in the light of our discussion in Chapter Two, it quickly becomes apparent that the language-based problems that confronted students, teachers and policy-makers during the 1842-1913 period were similar to those encountered by their counterparts elsewhere in the Empire. As we noted in 2.2.2, in the

early twentieth century major reviews of language policy were conducted in India (2.1.9), the Straits Settlements (2.2.2) and Hong Kong (6.4). Although these reviews do not seem to have been part of a concerted Whitehall-inspired effort to understand and address the problems of language in colonial education, their appearance at this time was perhaps not entirely coincidental, for by the close of the Victorian era the unfortunate results of the experiment with English-language education in the preceding half century had become fully apparent. Although the circumstances of India, the Straits and Hong Kong differed in a number of important respects, as far as the teaching and learning of English were concerned, a similar pattern emerged in each dependency during the second half of the nineteenth century (and in this regard it is instructive to compare the problems outlined in the previous paragraph with the extracts from the Indian Universities Commission report and the Resolution on education policy cited in 2.1.9).

The evidence therefore suggests that the problems described by educationalists such as Stewart, Wright and Eitel, and discussed by bodies such as the Education Conference, the Education Commission and the Committee on Education, were not unique to Hong Kong but in fact part of a wider imperial pattern. This seems to be a significant finding because in the literature on language in Hong Kong education, there has (to date) been little or no attempt to examine language policies and practices in relation to developments in the Empire as a whole, as is immediately evident from a perusal of major studies of language in Hong Kong education and society such as Lord and Cheng (1987), Luke (1992), Pennington (1998), Li *et al.* (2000) and Poon (2000).

What also appears to be significant is that the problems that confronted students, teachers and policy-makers in Hong Kong between 1842 and 1913 were not only similar to those experienced by their counterparts elsewhere, but were also in *some* respects similar to

those faced by their counterparts in the modern era. As was the case a hundred years before, the late twentieth century witnessed a significant expansion in Anglo-Chinese schooling; this expansion was fuelled by a strong pragmatic demand for English; most students who entered the Anglo-Chinese schools did not possess the requisite proficiency to learn effectively in English; the emphasis on English in the curriculum prevented students from fully developing the literacy skills in Chinese which they had begun to acquire at primary school; most teachers used Cantonese in order to make the ill-adapted, overly academic curriculum comprehensible; many teachers lacked the necessary training and proficiency to teach effectively in English; government parsimony ensured that English was taught and learned in cramped, spartan classrooms containing forty or more students. The result was hardly surprising: most students graduated from the Anglo-Chinese schools not only lacking the high levels of proficiency in English that were supposed to be the hallmark an English-medium education, but also without a firm grounding in written Chinese. In other words, as in the late nineteenth century (though to a much less serious extent), the products of the modern Anglo-Chinese schools were perceived to fall between two stalls, a state of affairs that was a source of frustration in government, business and education circles throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

This study was motivated in part by the belief that a broad historical perspective might illuminate our understanding of the 'language malaise' that afflicted Hong Kong during the era of mass Anglo-Chinese secondary education. It was this malaise that the post-colonial government sought to address in its controversial policy to force most Anglo-Chinese schools to switch their official medium of instruction from English to Chinese. As the policy was introduced in Secondary 1 in the 1998-1999 academic year, it is too early to determine whether the 'new' Anglo-Chinese stream (i.e. the 114 schools permitted to

continue teaching in English) has succeeded in raising standards. In the meantime, dissatisfaction with the results of English-language education continues to dominate public discourse about English in Hong Kong. In a recent newspaper article, Kevin Sinclair argues that the ‘whole system’ needs to be ‘overhauled’ because English standards are ‘lamentably low’ (*South China Morning Post*, 18 September 2002: 19). Sinclair’s piece prompted an English teacher, Simon Ross, to present a view from the chalk-face:

I am surprised that the lamentable English-language standards of students in Secondary 4 and 5 is not considered a major scandal ... many students cannot read, frame a coherent sentence or utter a comprehensible statement after 14 or 15 years of instruction in the language, it is a disgrace. (*SCMP*, 23 September 2002: 17)

Ross’s observations are similar to those of a British Council officer, Keith Westcott, almost a quarter of a century ago:

It is tragic that so much time is given to English language teaching in the education system with so little result ... it is quite usual to meet people who have studied all this English and cannot put a simple sentence together, either orally or in writing. (*Hong Kong Standard*, 10 October 1979: 5)

Eitel reached much the same conclusion in his 1879 education report: ‘... an overwhelming majority of scholars leave our Government Schools year after year unable to speak English’ (*HKGG*, 28 April 1880: 361). For Eitel, the principal cause of ‘this manifest educational failure’ was the schools’ policy of allocating equal time to the study of English and Chinese, and their teachers’ practice of mixing English and Cantonese when teaching English subjects.

As we saw in 5.3.3 and 6.3.3, Eitel’s solution to what he termed ‘this Anglo-Chinese problem’ was that students should concentrate on English (or, if proficiency in the first language was the desired objective, on Chinese). In essence, this was the conclusion of policy-makers in the 1990s, for, as we have seen, the new policy requires that students be assigned to either English-medium or Chinese-medium schools and that code mixing be

proscribed in the classroom. While there is nothing original about the concept of linguistic segregation (although, as a policy, it was rarely enforced), what is new – in the Hong Kong context – is the attempt to restrict access to English-medium schooling only to those who are likely to benefit from a genuine immersion programme. As we saw in Chapter Two, this idea was often mooted – and in some contexts actually implemented – by policy-makers in the Empire. The first official to foretell the problems that would flow from the indiscriminate spread of English-language education was the Orientalist scholar, H.H. Wilson. Writing in the *Asiatic Journal* at the height of the Orientalist-Anglicist dispute, Wilson argued that it would be ‘impossible to impart widely an English education of a high description’ as most native students possessed neither the ability nor the interest to benefit from their studies. Instead, he advised the authorities to ‘cultivate English soundly and circumscribedly’. As it happens, the colonial authorities in India, Hong Kong and elsewhere generally ignored Wilson’s eminently sound pedagogically-based advice, and instead adhered to the principle advocated by his bitter adversary, T.B. Macaulay, namely that language policy should be dictated by the ‘state of the market’.

In a mercantile society like Hong Kong, it is not surprising that ‘market forces’ – in the broadest sense – tended to outweigh pedagogical principles in shaping attitudes towards the teaching and learning of English. Frederick Stewart, a major figure in our story, complained that nothing seemed to find favour with his students that did not ‘bear a market value’: ‘Hence,’ he noted, ‘the comparative success of the Central School, English being convertible into *dollars*; hence, also, the neglect of the Vernacular Schools, Chinese being *unsaleable*’ [italics in the original] (*HKBB*, 1865: 282). Chinese was also perceived to be ‘unsaleable’ a century later, when the chance interaction of endogenous and exogenous forces – political, economic, demographic – created an environment which placed a high

premium on a knowledge of English. Although the colonial authorities knew that most students were unable to learn effectively in what was still a remote foreign language, they were loath to incur the wrath of local parents by denying their children the opportunity for mobility by limiting access to English-medium education. In the dying years of colonial rule, the authorities did of course devise a policy to ‘cultivate English soundly and circumscribedly’, but they were careful to ensure that its full import would be felt only after the Britannia was safely clear of Hong Kong waters; an approach that may be seen as emblematic of the whole imperial adventure.

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